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DEAREST IS DEAREST.

By T. Preston Battersby.

CHAPTER I.

A SHORT November afternoon was drawing near to its close. Winter had not yet fully set in in Ireland, and the air was still mild; but a black damp mist hung over the river Inny and the low-lying meadows around, and rolled in dense masses up the old coach-road and through the village of Ballinalack. Every leafless twig in the hedges condensed it, and was loaded with drops of water, which dripped steadily on the wet grass as they became large enough to fall by their own weight, for there was not wind enough to disturb them. The thatched roofs with their mossy coverings were great sponges of moisture; and the ducks splashed about gaily in the puddles, rejoiced that they could find plenty of water for their ablutions without taking the trouble to waddle down to the river. In fact, it was a day on which an Englishman would have vituperated the weather heartily and retired to read a novel in front of a cheerful fire.

But to the damp-inured natives of Ballinalack it was no more than a "fine soft day—thank the Lord!" A few of them even took the trouble to put on their gray frieze overcoats. The village streets was full of them; the men leaning their backs against any convenient wall, and smoking their clay pipes in passive enjoyment of that *dolce far niente* which they can appreciate as much as any Italian of the sunny South; the women gossiping, running into and out of each other's houses, scolding and smacking the dirty children who were playing in the puddles, and altogether having a busy time of it. The public-houses—of which there seemed to be at least one for every private house in the village—were doing a good business, as they generally did. As for the fact that there was not a respectable dwelling in the place, or a clean spot to rest the eye upon, or a window without a broken pane in it, no one remarked that, or, had they remarked it, would have cared in the least that it should be so. Thay were perfectly satisfied with the order of things, and no reformer had come that way to make them discontented.

There was, however, on this particular afternoon, a lack of material for conversation, of which they were dimly conscious. No one had sold a horse lately, or lost a cow in a "gripe," or been sent to jail; nor had even the river amused them that summer by flooding their hayfields, and so postponing the season of haymaking to some indefinite time before Christmas. The Inny Drainage had changed all that. It was a perfect godsend when the wheels of a car were heard accompanied by the footsteps of a fast-trotting horse, and it became evident that some one was about to pass through the village.

The car came at last—a smart, well-painted vehicle, with one footboard turned up to serve as a shelter for the seat on that side. A fine throughbred mare was in the shafts, and it was driven by a young man of thirty or thereabouts, who wore a brown cap

with ear-flaps, and an immense ulster with a heavy cape. Several of the loungers touched their hats to him as he drove rapidly past, and he acknowledged the salutation by a slight movement of his hand, but without looking up, or attempting to moderate the speed at which he drove, though ducks flew, and hens screeched, and mothers snatched their children out of the way. In a minute or two he had passed the village and was well on his way towards Bunbrosna. Then broke forth a volley of ejaculations and gossip.

"Musha, then, Master Charles is in a hurry this fine day," said one stalwart man as he wiped the mud off his coat with a wisp of hay. "Sorra much he cares for the likes of us. Look at me new coat, that I bought in Edgeworthstown last January; sure, he's destroyed it entirely."

"What harm if he did?" remarked a woman. "You can well afford to buy another, Tim Higgins! And why wouldn't he be in a hurry when Biddy Moran says the old man is mortal bad and his reverence wanted at once?"

"Whew!" said another man, with a long whistle. "That's the way of it, is it! And so the fiend will have his will of the old miser at last. It's a long time now that he's been waiting for him! We'll have a new landlord now, boys, and God send us a good one, for sure they're not plenty."

"They do say that he has left all his money to Master Charles," said the woman who had before spoken. "Biddy Moran will know all about it. Sure, she was at service in the big house when he came there first. I'm going to ask her about him now; and you had better come too, Tim Higgins, if you want to know."

This speech caused a general movement in the direction of Biddy Moran's. That lady rejoiced in the proud possession of a Government appointment, for she was postmistress of Ballinalack, and resided in the best house of the village. It had a slated roof, and was of much superior construction to its neighbors. Probably in the old days, when the Dublin and Sligo coach ran, it may have been an inn of some pretensions; but now it was divided into three tenements, and, by virtue of rotten wood-work, loose slates, and cracked windows stuffed with rags, was striving hard to assimilate itself with the recognized system of architecture of the cabins around it. It had not quite succeeded as yet, but no doubt would do so in time. In the centre one of the three tenements lived Biddy Moran; and a proud woman was she that day when her room was crowded with an attentive audience, and she was requested to relate all that she knew of Master Charles and his ways, and whether the rumor that he was to be their future landlord were likely to be a true one. In the pride of possession of information; she first of all exercised various petty acts of tyranny, made the men put their pipes out, and insisted upon the ejection of an old woman whom she regarded as a personal enemy, and who having been compelled by the universal sentiment of the meeting, aided by a little use of physical force, to vacate the premises, seated herself on the doorstep outside and made the air vocal with complaints and threats. Being pacified by the ready obedience of her audience, Biddy at last condescended to take a chair, accept of a half-noggin of whisky tendered her by an admirer; and begin her story, which she told readily enough, having the true Irish gift of fluency. Most of those present had heard it before, but never in such detail.

"It will be ten years next Hallintide," she began, "since I first took service with old Dardas. I was only a slip of a girl then, and places were hard to get; and my father was behind with his rent and dreaded to be evicted by the old miser, so one day he went up to the big house to see if Dardas would give him time. The old man was as hard as nails, and must have his money down.

"'Faix, then,' says my father, 'you may evict me at once, for I haven't got it to give you, and maybe you won't get another tenant in a hurry to pay you ten pounds a year for a mud cabin that I propped up the wall of myself last summer with a stump of an ash tree; and a couple of acres of marshy land that's good for growing rushes and nothing else!'

"Maybe the old fellow thought so too, for he considered in his mind a bit. 'You have a daughter!' says he.

"'I have so,' says my father.

"'What age is she?' says he.

"'Rising eighteen,' says my father.

"'Well,' says old Dardas, 'I'm in want of a servant just now; so if you like to send her up here I'll take her on trial and give her six pounds a year; and the first year's

wages can go to pay your arrears. After that I can deduct it from your rent.'

"'Musha, then it is yourself that is the hard man,' says my father, 'but make it ten pounds and it's a bargain.'

"'I said six,' said old Dardas, 'and what I say I mean. Bring me your daughter or the money to-morrow, or you know what to expect!'

"So the long and the short of it was that I had to go; and sure, anyhow, wasn't it better than to have the old people (God rest their souls!) turned out on the road, with nothing to look for but the poor-house?"

"True for you, Biddy!" said a sympathetic auditor, who had been through the same experience herself.

"Murther! but that was the hard place I had of it!" continued Biddy Moran, warmed like a true orator, by the fellow-feeling of her audience. "Only that potatoes was cheap and plenty, I'd have been starved entirely; and as it was, I was famished with the cold; for the old man wouldn't buy firing. He trusted to one tenant or another bringing him a load of turf when they wanted a favor of him; but sure there weren't many were fools enough to do that, for mostly he kept the turf and sent them about their business. He was for ever prowling round to see I didn't steal anything, though, dear knows, it's little there was to steal. When my father died and my mother went into the poor-house, I made up my mind I'd go, but just then Master Charles came and things got a little better.

"He was old Dardas' nephew; and I mind well the day he came riding like a gentleman on a car from Multy Station. He had a face then that would do you good to look at; but it has altered since. He knocked at the door as if the place belonged to him, and when the old man came out he shook hands with him as if he expected a hearty welcome. 'Here I am, uncle!' says he. 'You see I didn't delay long when I got your letter.'

"'So I perceive, sir,' says old Dardas, with a sneer in his face. 'I did not expect you would.'

"And after that they went into the parlor, and left me and the car-driver to carry in the luggage. More by token the driver told me to ask the master for a glass of whisky, and I had to tell him there was none in the house. 'Faix, then,' says he, as he gathered up his reins to drive off, 'I wish the young gentleman joy of the place he is come to! I never yet knew good to come out of a house where they couldn't give a poor man a glass of whisky!'"

There were various murmurs of assent from the audience, who were evidently all of the car-driver's opinion. Biddy laughed and continued her story.

"I was tidying up the kitchen that evening when Master Charles came in. He sat down in front of the fire and began to fill his pipe. 'I am going to have a smoke down here, Mary,' says he, 'as the master seems not to like the smell of tobacco up-stairs.'

"'Biddy, my name is, sir,' says I, 'begging your pardon for saying so.'

"'Of course—of course,' says he, and I saw he blushed a little. 'How stupid I am.' Then he got up and took a walk round the kitchen, looking at everything. 'Why, Biddy,' he says after a while, 'you don't seem to have many cooking utensils. How do you get on at all?'

"'Faix, there's plenty of them to cook all I ever have to put in them,' says I. 'If pots and pans were the only thing wanting in this house, we'd be the better off.'

"Well, to that he said nothing, but just sat down again in his chair and smoked his pipe and looked into the fire, thinking, like. And when he had finished his tobacco, he only said, 'Good-night, Biddy!' and went off to his room. I thought, maybe, he was offended at my free speaking; but I was determined to have my say, and not to let the old chap humbug him at the very beginning.

"Old Dardas seemed to take greatly to his nephew, and what's more, he let him have his own way in the house, and things soon began to mend. We had better food and more of it; and Master Charles glazed all the broken windows himself and mended the pailings and gates; and by-and-by there came a load of furniture down, and the place began to look more home-like. I thought the old chap must be near death to be spending his money that way. But he was as hard as ever with his tenants; and except to Master Charles, I never heard him give a good word to any one.

"One morning I was bringing in the breakfast, and I thought I heard quarreling in the parlor. They stopped when I came in; but old Dardas had a wicked look in his face that I knew well, and the young master was reading a letter. So, when I went out,

I just made a good noise going down-stairs, and then took off my brogues and stole up again in my stockinged feet to strive to hear what they were saying. It was the old man that was speaking when I got to the door.

"'Now, sir,' he was saying, 'there's no two words about it. I'm not going to have a nephew of mine marrying a girl that has not enough money to buy her clothes, let alone to feed herself. If you want to have her, you'll leave this; and if you want to stay, you'll just sit down and write her a letter giving her up; and what's more, you'll let me read it before it goes. You sha'n't have it to say that I didn't deal fairly with you. You are the only relation I have of the name, and if you obey me, I mean to leave you my money when I die. Ten thousand pounds it is, and all in good Midland Railway shares, and the farm to the back of it. If that's not worth more than any girl that ever was born, be she whom she may, just say so, and be off with you, for you shall be no heir of mine.'

"'But, uncle,' says Master Charles; and then as ill luck would have it, a troublesome cough that I have at times began with me, and I had to hurry down-stairs again for fear I'd be caught; so I heard no more of it. But after that day I noticed a change in Master Charles. He had a kind word for me still, but his face was turned hard like, and he didn't whistle about the house the way he used to do. The old man treated him well enough, and bought him a throughbred to ride to the hounds, and he had the best of clothes; but sure what's them things to a man when his heart is sore?"

"True for you Biddy!" from the audience.

"Now," continued Miss Moran impressively, "mind, I'll not have a word said agen him! He has a kind heart of his own, or at least he had when I knew him; and when the old miser turned me out of his house for giving a haporth of meal to a beggar that came to the back door, it was Master Charles that saved me from the workhouse; and got me put into the post-office. He's not been to see me since, and I've heard that he's turned hard on the people, like his uncle; but mark my words—he'll make you a better landlord than ever old Dardas did."

"Sure, he couldn't make us a worse, so that's but poor comfort, Biddy," said a man.

"Good or bad, he'll be good enough for you, Pat," said Miss Moran scornfully. "The best man that ever you were, an ass and a cart could draw you!" Under cover of which brilliant piece of repartee the lady withdrew into the privacy of her shop, and her audience slowly dispersed to talk over future prospects.

Meanwhile, the hero of so many thoughts had reached the Glebe House, and sent in his name to the clergyman, who at once admitted him to his study. It was a warm, well-furnished room, and formed a strong contrast to the outward appearance of the rectory, which was an ugly square building, on low-lying land not far from the Inny, a veritable "House on the Marsh," always surrounded with mist and fog during the winter months, and sometimes the whole year round when the summer was a wet one. A terrible place for children with their delicate lungs and throat, so more than one poor clergyman had learned to his cost. But its present occupant was unmarried and had a constitution of iron, and so was able to make a jest of his unenviable residence.

He came forward to meet his visitor—a fine tall man with iron grey hair and massive forehead and chin—not the ordinary type of a clergyman by any means, unfortunately!

Charles Dardas briefly explained his errand—his uncle was dying, and had expressed a wish to see the clergyman. There was no time to be lost; and if the rector could conveniently drive back with him on his car, he would esteem it a great favor.

The rector stepped forward to the hearth and put one or two sods of turf on the fire; then stood up and looked the young man in the face very gravely. "Certainly I will go with you, Mr. Dardas," he said. "I wish I could say "go gladly," but that would scarcely be true. I am weary of people sending for me on their death-beds, that by some magical process I may make their peace with the Almighty, whom they have never thought of in their lives. Am I not right in supposing that your uncle never attended church—or you either, indeed, sir, since you came amongst us!"

"My uncle has never attended church since I knew him," answered the young man coolly, and with a shade of surprise at the question in his manner. "As for me, sir, I cannot recognize that you have any right to inquire as to my private affairs—you must forgive me for saying so."

"I fear you are ignorant of the duties and responsibilities of a clergyman," said the

rector quietly as he put on his overcoat. "However the most urgent duty at present appears to be to see your uncle; so, with you permission we will start at once. It will be dark before we get there."

"I have lamps on the car," said the young man, as he followed him.

Twenty minutes later they reached the gate which closed the short, straight avenue leading up to the house of Mr. Dardas. It was now quite dark; but the rain had ceased, and the car lamps gave light enough to enable them to see their way, though the path was neglected, and had not, clearly, been gravelled for years. At the door of the house they were met by the successor of Biddy Moran, an unkempt Irish lass, with tangled hair and short petticoats, who was weeping profusely, as all her nation can on very slight provocation.

"O Master Charles," she cried, as she saw the pair approach, "why were you so long in coming. Sure the master is dead this ten minutes!"

The young man started slightly, but gave no other sign of emotion. Then he turned to the clergyman. "Would you mind coming up to see him, sir?" he said, "or would you prefer not to do so?"

"I will go," said the rector, and was about to mount the stairs, when he saw the servant clutch her young master by the coat and whisper something to him eagerly.

The young man laughed. "She says, sir, that she has laid the body out with candles; but if it displeases you, she will run on in front and put them out."

"Leave them burning, by all means," said the rector. "They cannot harm the dead, and it was a kindly thought on her part."

Then they mounted the stairs, and Charles Dardas opened the door of his uncle's room. It was an ill-furnished ugly apartment, with no pictures or ornaments, nothing but the practically useful, and barely enough of that. At present it was, however, a blaze of light, owing to the tapers which the Irishwoman had lit at the head and foot of the bed. There was no one in the room, for the doctor had left an hour before, not expecting so speedy an end to his patient. The two men approached the bed and looked down on the face of its occupant. It had been an unlovely face always, and the hard, cruel expression seemed to have been only intensified by death. The chin and upper lip were covered with a stubby growth of gray hair—the result of a fortnight's want of shaving, and the open eyes glared upwards in a ghastly and intolerable manner. As they watched him, it seemed to them as though there were still some remnant of life dormant in those glassy orbs. The young man bent over and took the wrist of the limp arm in his hand, with a view to feeling if any pulse were there. The touch, light though it was, seemed to act like a shock of a galavanic battery. The apparent corpse rose in the bed and sat upright. With a wild shriek, the servant fled from the room, down-stairs, and out of the house. But the men had firmer nerves, and though greatly startled; stood where they were, and interrogated one another with their eyes.

CHAPTER II.

IT was a very ghastly sight when the old man rose in his bed and looked round him. His face had not a particle of color in it, and his eyes retained the fixed look which they had borne a minute before. Yet it was evident that he saw, for he cast a glance round him upon the tapers and emitted a ghostly sort of chuckle from his dry lips. "J. G. D., you're dead!" he croaked, in a voice that had little human about it. "That's how it is, J. G. D.; you never were bested—never; and so it was only fair to give you a chance to come back and let your nephew have your last words. Sit down, Charles; sit down, and write; and, mind you, all I am saying now is as true as the gospel, for I'm dead!"

In spite of his common-sense, the clergyman half believed him, his voice and actions were so painfully like those of a galvanized corpse. But Charles Dardas coolly seated himself at a table by the bedside, and put paper and ink before him, as if the act of writing a dead man's words from dictation were too common to call for comment.

"That's right, Charles," said the old man approvingly. "Now, put down what I tell you. Pat Farrell is not to have the rent of the moneen reduced, for he's well able to pay it; and so is Tim Higgins to pay his. As for Tom Cox, he is worth nothing, and he may go. Those Midland shares you may hold on to, for they will go up before long. Have you all that down?"

"Stop! stop!" cried the rector, who had

recovered his senses a little. "Consider, Mr. Dardas; you may only have a few minutes more to live, and will you spend them on these earthly affairs? I entreat you to let me offer up a prayer for you, that the Almighty may have mercy on you even at the eleventh hour." And the good man fell on his knees by the side of the bed.

"Up with you, out of that!" screeched the old man. "Don't I tell you I'm dead! And it is for a protestant parson like you to be praying for the dead? Go on, Charles. He's a fool, but you are not; and you'll know the value of a message like this from a dead man!"

The young man had raised his eyes curiously, at the rector's appeal. When he heard his uncle's answer, he smiled rather bitterly, but did not utter a word. He now resumed his writing in a mechanical fashion. The clergyman prayed on half audibly, trying to relieve his soul from the oppression that weighed it down in the presence of these two automata.

"Write!" commanded the old man again. "Those brand canal shares are going down; best sell them at once. The Widow Murphy cannot manage the farm alone; you must evict her and put a "warm" man into it. I am leaving you a fine property; see that you have added to it when you die, or my curse will follow you. Don't you ever be bested by any man. J. G. D. never was bested! J. G. D. never—was"—— His voice had been getting fainter and fainter, and he now sank back on the pillow, and his jaw fell.

The young man rose and again carefully felt his pulse. Then he turned to the rector, who still remained on his knees, praying. "It is over now, sir," he said quietly. "He is really dead at last!"

The clergyman rose to his feet, staggered to a chair, and buried his face in his hands. "How awful!—how awful!" he said. "Oh Mr. Dardas, will you not take warning from this? Here is a soul gone into the presence of its maker without one thought of repentance—not one—occupied to the very last with the world and its devices. Lord! Thou wilt not require this soul at my hands?"

"You are a good man!" said Charles Dardas, looking at him curiously. "I wish I had known you before."

"It is never too late!" cried the rector, taking his hand earnestly—"never!"

"I fear it is in my case, said the young man carelessly. "However, we shall see. Can I offer you a glass of wine? It will refresh you after the painful scene you have gone through."

"Not in this house—not in this house," answered the rector. "I will walk home—you need not trouble to drive me; the walk will do me good." And without waiting for the guidance of his host, he hastily redescended the stairs and hurried through the open door into the night.

Once outside, he heaved a sigh of relief. The sky had cleared at last, and a pale crescent moon was shining. The calm moonlight was the same relief to the eyes after the yellow glare of the tapers that the peace of the night was to the troubled mind of the rector. He stood for a few minutes with his hat off taking in the calm of the scene, and then turned his steps homeward.

Outside Ballinalack he was met by a crowd of men, women, and children, armed with lanterns and sticks. Mr. Dardas' servant had brought so wild an account to the village of how the devil had got into his master's corpse, that the whole population—distrusting the powers of a protestant minister to exorcise the demon—had turned out to assist in the pious office. They had captured the "jockeyman" of the village, who had a great reputation for circumventing witches and disenchanting churns; and being in sufficient numbers to keep up each other's courage, they were making good progress towards the haunted house. It was rather a disappointment to most of them when the rector explained to them the facts of the case. Some of the old women went on with the servant to assist in laying out the corpse; but the majority of the crowd retraced their steps to Ballinalack, and had a fresh drink all round in the public-houses while they discussed the news.

Meanwhile, in the old house, Charles Dardas sat alone with the body of his uncle. When the rector left him, he had drawn a chair to the bedside and gazed long and intently on the dead face on the pillow. There was little love or regret in his glance, rather a look of resentment than hatred, which imparted a sinister expression to his countenance, very unusual to it. After a while, he sighed wearedly, and went to the window, against the cool glass of which he leaned his hot forehead, The party of old women coming up the dark avenue took the

pale face illumined by the bright background for a real and veritable ghost, and this time it must be confessed that they were not far wrong. However, after the first moments of fright, the maidservant recognized her young master, so they took courage and went in.

Two days later the funeral was held, and the lawyer from Mullingar read Mr. Dardas' will which had been entrusted to his keeping. It left all the property of the deceased, real and personal, to his nephew, on the one condition that the latter should, within two years from the date of the testator's death, marry a woman with a dowry of at least five thousand pounds sterling. If this condition were not fulfilled, the property was to be sold, and the proceeds handed over to the trustees of the Adelaide Hospital in Dublin.

"You will not have much trouble in carrying out the condition," said the lawyer, smiling, as he folded up the parchment. "With a face like yours, and a fortune worth at least twenty thousand pounds, you will not have much difficulty in finding an heiress. I must congratulate you on your good fortune. I hope you will still continue to give me the benefit of your legal business?"

"Certainly," said the young man abstractedly. The provisions of the will had evidently come upon him unexpectedly, and he was turning them over in his mind. "It is a curious will," he said, after a pause. "I wonder why my uncle inserted that condition?"

"Well," replied the lawyer, "at this time of day you will forgive me for saying that Mr. Dardas was a "close" man, and did not like to part with anything without an equivalent. I suppose he valued *you* at five thousand pounds, and did not choose that you should throw yourself away for less. A very good example of his "nearness" in money matters is, that he made out his will himself without consulting me—in order to save my fee, no doubt. As a natural result, he has composed a document which lends itself to evasion with the greatest ease. For, let us suppose that you want to marry a penniless girl"—and here he looked at Charles Dardas from under his eyebrows—"all you would have to do would be to settle five thousand pounds upon her by deed of gift, and then she becomes an heiress within the terms of the bequest. If I had been consulted about the will, I would have inserted clauses which would effectually have stopped up that loophole. But as I had neither part nor lot in the matter, I am quite ready to give you any assistance in my power to evade the condition, should you find it at any future time a restraint upon your liberty. Good-by, sir; I rely upon your promise to employ me" and, with a smile, the lawyer departed, congratulating himself on having done a good day's work, and laid the foundation of much profitable business. For his car-driver was a friend of Biddy Moran's, and had given the man of law a hint of how matters had stood between the dead man and his heir, which hint the lawyer was quite capable of expanding and acting upon.

When he was left alone, Charles Dardas went to his own room, and seating himself at his desk, began a letter, which was evidently not an easy one to write. Sheet after sheet was begun, only to be torn up and consigned to the waste-paper basket. At last he saw that he had come to the last sheet of note-paper in the secretaire, and that if he spoiled this, he would be unable to continue his letter without a fresh supply from Ballinalack. So, setting to work desperately, he wrote on, not daring to read what he had penned, lest he should be driven to destroy it.

"My Dearest Mary!" he wrote, "I wonder what you will say when you receive this letter, and realize that it is in my handwriting. I do not think you will throw it aside unopened; you are not cruel enough for that! I am free at last, Mary! If you only knew what that means to me. I have fulfilled my share of the bargain—I have finished my slavery, and now I have gained my reward. My uncle has left me the whole of his property, valued at about twenty thousand pounds, on the one condition that I marry within the next two years a woman with a fortune of five thousand pounds. I was terrified when I heard the condition; but my lawyer advises me that it is easily to be evaded by a deed of gift making over the required sum to the girl I love. So that now nothing stands in the way of our marriage. I myself will give you your dowry of five thousand pounds, and it will be yours forever, to spend how you wish, and to leave to whom you like.

"You have too much good sense, I am sure, to reproach me with my conduct of

late years, although you did not answer my last letter. You know that my uncle insisted on my breaking off our engagement and ceasing our correspondence, as a condition of his making me his heir. And you know how impossible it would have been for two people like ourselves to marry without money. Surely, then, I took the wisest course and you understand that I did. We can marry now, with a good competence, and live happily for the rest of our lives. You will find plenty to do here, for the people are semi-savages, though affectionate enough in disposition; and the house and farm need much to be done to them.

"Perhaps you may still be angry with me Mary; but you know you love me as I love you. I rely on your love, and I an sure I shall not find it wanting. Just send me a line to fix the day, and I will have a deed of gift drawn up and present it to you with my own hands in Dublin. I shall be lonely here, till you come! Ever your loving

CHARLES!"

He had closed the letter without reading it, and put it in his pocket, intending to walk out to the village and post it. But he had not forseen the curiosity of Biddy Moran, who caught him by the arm when he appeared at the door of her post-office, and insisted on his coming indoors to tell her all about the poor master's last moments. Charles Dardas was, at bottom, kind-hearted, and had a liking for Biddy, so did not care to hurt her by a refusal. She was profuse in tears and blessings and good wishes for him.

"There was some," she said meditatively, "who thought to call in Tim Healy, the jockeyman, to cure the old master. And sure if any one could have cured him, it would have been Tim. Does your honor know little Pat Geoghegan, the baker's son? Last Christmas he got a terrible falling of the roof of the mouth, and he could take neither bite nor sup; so they called in Tim. 'Musha, then!' says he when he sees him, 'that's aisy cured!' And with that he gets on a chair and takes Pat by the hair of the head, and lifts him up off the ground, and he kicking and striving to squeal, for all the world like a pig when they are ringing it. With that, flhop goes something, and the roof of his mouth came up again, drawed up off his tongue, like. And he was well at wanst. Oh, Tim is a great docthor entirely! I wouldn't wonder, now, if he had cured the ould man. But maybe if he had, yourself wouldn't have been too well pleased, for he led you a hard life of it, Master Charles!"

Charles Dardas had laughed heartily at the Irish version of a practical cure for quinzy, but at Biddy's last words his face darkened.

"See here, Biddy! Let me hear no more of that. My uncle was kind enough to me, whatever he was to other people, and I'll not hear a word said against him, now he is dead. You may just let the Ballinalack people know that. I am ready to do the right thing by them if they act fairly by me. But if I hear of any stories being told about my uncle, or me, or my affairs, I will let them know that I can be as hard a landlord as ever they had. Do you understand me?"

"Av coorse, I do, sir," said Biddy humbly. "And shure, when all is said and done, the ould master was as good as the rest of us. God rest his soul! I never asked better than to live with him till he himself turned me away."

Charles smiled and went out, posting his letter as he did so. Biddy always made a point of reading the addresses of the correspondence that passed through her hands, before handing it over to the mail-cart. When she saw a letter addressed in Charles Dardas' handwriting to "Miss Mary Davidson, Rathgar Road, Rathmines, Dublin," she formed her own conclusions, but judged it safer not to communicate them to any but two or three of her especial cronies, who, with her, waited eagerly for an answer.

It came by the return mail, and was forwarded with some other letters to the Dardas mansion by a special messenger—the very Pat Geoghegan of the "fallen palate," who had strict injunctions to watch the young master while he read it and see how he took it. But this well-meant attempt at espionage was frustrated by Charles Dardas, who put the letter in his pocket when he received it, and carried it to his room for private perusal. Pat, however, was equal to the occasion, and having been promised a penny if he succeeded in his commission, composed a telling narrative of how "the master was struck all of a heap like, and turned as white as a sheet," etc. The inventive power displayed by him was quite worth a penny, and he duly earned it.

Charles Dardas sat and looked at the envelope a long time before he opened it. To tell the truth, he was far from being confident of the answer of his sweetheart as he had pretended. He had serious doubts, deep down in his own heart, of the course he had pursued, and though he had succeeded in making his own conscience pretty comfortable, he dreaded that of a woman, whose insight into the principles of right and wrong may easily be argued into silence, but is not so easily convinced as that of a man. At last he broke the seal and began the letter.

"DEAR CHARLES," it ran. "You say that you know I love you! Well, I own it; it is true. I *do* love you, and I always shall. In *that* nothing you have done or can do will ever make any difference. In this letter I am going to try to put things clearly between us, for at any cost truth is best, is it not?

"Knowing that I love you, you ask me to condone your sacrifice of me, for the sake of money, and your breaking of our engagement. I think, Charles, my love is so strong that I can do that too! But then, you ask me to share in the wealth that you have acquired by your sacrifice—and, more than that, to assist you in evading the conditions on which you acquired that wealth. You ask me to receive a bribe of money—to sell myself and my self-respect for a home, a vocation, and a few thousand pounds. That, Charles, I cannot do.

"Let us put love aside, and reason the matter out on the pratical grounds which you think superior. You deliberately give me up, years ago, rather than lose your chance of inheriting your uncle's fortune—though for that fortune you might have had to wait ten, nay, twenty years. I did not reproach you then, and I will not now; but oh! Charles, how can you expect me to trust myself to you now, when I have learned by experience that you love money more? I *could* not do it. I should always have in my mind the feeling that money was more to you than I was. It would be a profanation of the sacred tie of marriage.

"And then, again, you know my views of right and wrong. If a man's will means anything, it means an expression of the wishes of the dead, which, to my mind at least, are as binding when written down in a document without a signature, as when embodied in the most legal form. You ask me to help you to evade the dead man's wishes—nay, to run flatly contrary to them—for you must see that that condition was expressly intended to bar your marriage with me! And yet you would take his money! Charles, I cannot believe that you would do this yourself, if you think it over.

"And yet, I own again that I love you; and what is more, I believe that you love me, in spite of these past years. You are young, strong, well educated, a man to make your name in the world. If I understand you, the income of the property is yours unconditionally, for the next two years. Use it to start yourself in a profession; you are sure to get on. Let those two years be the time of your real betrothal; and at their end, when all that money, which has a curse upon it is gone from you, we will marry and live as best we can. I shall not be afraid to trust myself to you then! No! I shall be able to look up to you as my husband, to admire you as a noble man who has preferred love and righteous dealing to money. O Charles, if you knew how I hope and pray that you may be guided to do this!—if you knew what a woman's love is, and how it longs to see its objects standing high above his fellow-men—a hero who can be worshiped as well as loved!

"Think before you write again, and, if you have not forgotten how to pray, pray earnestly on the matter before you decide, for you are deciding the happiness of two lives, and perhaps—I speak it with all reverence—the future of your own soul! After all that I have said, you will understand me when I sign myself as in bygone days—
Ever your loving MARY!"

Charles Dardas' face had grown darker and darker as he read. When he had concluded, he deliberately tore the letter into four pieces and put them on the blazing turf in the fireplace. The paper curled, shrivelled, and then flamed up, and flew in the fierce blast up the chimney. He watched the last fragment disappear, and then turned and left the room.

CHAPTER III.

IT was a hot day in July—a year and nine months after the events recorded in the foregoing chapter. Ballinalack had not changed for the better. If anything, there

were more broken windows, more ragged children, more public-houses. The last, it is true, were not so full as we have already seen them, but then most of the able-bodied men and women in the village were hay-making in the water-meadows. The ring of the scythe-blade as the ragstone was drawn along it sounded on every side, and the faint delicate scent of the fresh-cut hay perfumed the air. If the village of Ballinalack could have been wholly wiped away from the face of the earth, the day and prospect would have been perfection. As it was, there was something depressing about the contrast.

Charles Dardas was riding through the street on his throughbred mare. He looked many years older than when we last saw him, and his forehead was furrowed by lines that had not been there then. It was scarcely to be wondered at, for of late he had had much anxiety, and many wakeful nights. Only three months remained of the two years allowed him by his uncle's will for finding a well-dowered bride, and he was obliged to confess to himself that he would find it difficult to fulfill the conditions.

As for Mary Davidson, he had forgotten her, or rather persuaded himself that he had. At first, he had attempted, by writing long and specious letter, to shake her determination; but to them he got no answer. Then he made a journey to Dublin, and called at the house where she was acting in the capacity of nursery governess. The servant told him she was not at home. Having made two more calls with a like result, he reluctantly came to the conclusion that she did not wish to see him, and accordingly went home, to busy himself with the care of his fortune and estate.

In the temper in which he then was, he was not at all likely to prove an over-indulgent landlord, and so the people soon found. He quickly became more unpopular in the neighborhood than even his uncle had been; for the old man, though hard as the nether millstone, yet took a keen interest in his neighbors' affairs, which often flattered their pride. And his nephew took none at all. In fact, with few exceptions, he did not actually know his own tenants by sight. He insisted on their rents being paid on the day they were due, and that being done he was satisfied. Ballinalack was not likely to alter for the better under him. As he had set his heart upon money, money came to him. He prospered greatly. His stocks and shares rose in the market; there were good farming seasons; and his bargains in horse-flesh turned out prizes. The one thing needed now was a wife, with a dowry sufficient to secure him in the possession of the property forever.

Lawyer D—— had done his best for him, and had even gone so far as to give him, in strict confidence, a list containing the names of all the marriageable young ladies of whose fortunes he had personal knowledge. It was not a long list, and the young man determined to pay a series of visits to the houses indicated and choose for himself. He found it easy enough to procure invitations, for the people of Westmeath knew all about the will, and had little difficulty in surmising the object of the handsome squire's "duty calls." As for the young ladies, they, as in honor bound, affected perfect ignorance even to their own parents, wondered "why that stupid Mr. Dardas call so often," and in their own hearts were wild with jealousy of the other competitors for the prize. Charles Dardas was not a fool; and after a year of visiting, he knew pretty certainly that there were six girls of reasonable age, each possessed of a fortune over five thousand pounds, and any of whom would be only too happy to marry him! And still he did not propose.

The fact was, that like most human beings he expected too much. As he could not have his own Mary Davidson and his uncle's money, he wished to have a wife as like her as possible. As Mary Davidsons are scarce in this world, it was not at all likely that he would find one. He had not the slightest affection for any of his half-dozen heiresses—the only question was which would be the most bearable with whom to pass the rest of his existence!

At last one morning after a restless night, he decided desperately in favor of her whom he considered the least objectionable. She was the daughter of a gentleman-farmer living not far from Mullingar—Ellen Cooney by name. Little was known of her father beyond the fact that he had made his money somewhere in business; and had bought very cheaply the estate on which he now resided. But Lawyer D—— was well acquainted with the money matters of the family, and guaranteed the five thousand pounds at least. Ellen was a plump, good-natured girl not given to extravagant habits, and above all not "fast." It would be

hard if a man could not get on with her as the mistress of his house.

Nevertheless, the young man was far from happy as he rode out that July day to make his formal proposal. Do what he would to crush the nobler instincts of his soul, it was very hard to conceal from himself that he was acting a most unworthy part. Not caring to meet any one whom he knew, he put spurs to his steed, and galloped through the village of Ballinalack at a pace which caused the few people who were about to gaze after him, and wonder at the recklessness with which he risked the limbs of his valuable mare on the hard road. When once fairly beyond the houses, he allowed the spirited animal to drop into a gentle trot.

As he reached the turning to the vicarage, he saw the rector driving towards him in his car. There was a lady with him, whom Charles Dardas thought, from the casual glance he took, resembling Mary Davidson. Of course that was impossible; but he was far from willing to meet the rector, who had paid him more than one call since his uncle's death, and had put before him some inconvenient home-truths. The young man again spurred his mare and galloped on past the turning. In his haste, he did not notice that a stone had dropped from the arch of a culvert over a little stream which passed under the road. There was no excuse for his carelessness; for the stone had been out for a month or more, threatening all passers-by by the dangerous hole left in the roadway. The farmer who had contracted for the keeping in repair of that piece of the highway, had, as usual, cared far more for saving his hay than for the life and limbs of Her Majesty's subjects, and had postponed the repairs till the first wet day. It was an unfortunate postponement for Charles Dardas, for his steed in her wild gallop put her off fore-foot in the yawning chasm. Crash! down she came, breaking her leg in the fall, and her unfortunate rider was pitched over her head and on to his own. Where he fell, he lay, motionless and senseless, on the hard road.

The rector, and the lady with him, saw the catastrophe. He uttered a sharp cry, and whipped up his horse. She said nothing; but her face grew very white, and she clasped her hands together till the nails dug into the white flesh. In a few moments they had reached the scene of the catastrophe, and both sprang down and went to the side of the man. He still breathed, slowly and regularly; but there were no other signs of life. The lady seated herself on the road and took his head in her lap.

"Drive to Ballinalack, quick!" she said to the rector, "and get a door, a mattress, anything to carry him home on. I will take care of him till you come back."

He obeyed without a word, and she remained alone with the inanimate form in her arms. She looked up and down the road. There was no one in sight, and the rector's car was far on its way to the village. Then she broke down utterly into a fit of passionate weeping. She kissed the pale face again and again, on forehead, cheeks and eyes. She called to him by name, and adjured him to look up; but the set face, like an iron mask, remained cold and irresponsive to her caresses. Then she joined her hands and prayed.

It was not very long, though it seemed hours to her, before the rector's car returned at a brisk trot with four men and an improvised stretcher. They carried the body of Charles Dardas to his comfortless house and laid it on the bed. The doctor, hastily sent for, made an examination, and declared that there was a severe fracture of the skull, and that, in his opinion, there was no hope whatever of the patient's recovery.

"He may linger on like this for days, or weeks," said he to the rector, "if he is carefully attended to and fed regularly—that is, supposing that you find he can eat! But nature can't cure a fracture of the skull—nothing can except trepanning in such a case as this, and that would be almost certain death, the bone is so cracked. I would leave him to die in peace!"

"He shall not die!" said the lady. "Help me, Mr. Clarke! You do not believe that God will let him die like this without a chance of repentance. I am quite, quite sure He will not! I will stay and nurse him; and if the doctor consents, I will have the best surgeons in Dublin to see him."

"I shall be only too glad, Miss," answered the doctor. "But I should advise you to leave him alone for a while, and see if he by any miracle, recover consciousness without an operation. Trepanning, I am convinced, would only mean certain death. It cannot be put off too long unless there are signs of inflammation setting in, or unless he is visibly sinking."

"Do you think that you ought to stay here as his nurse, after all that has passed, Miss Davidson?" asked the rector, drawing her aside.

"Why not? He is not sensible; he will not know me," she answered, with a sob in her voice. "I will leave the moment he recovers consciousness, I promise you that."

"I can say no more," said the rector.

After that came a long, long time of weary and monotonous watching. The injured man took food without much difficulty; but his condition remained absolutely unchanged. But for the regular, slow breathing, he might have been taken for a corpse. As it was, he was more like a helpless automaton, wound up to perform one unvarying function, and capable of naught beside. Mary Davidson watched by his side night and day. The doctor came now and then, saw no change, and went away. And so the months drew on, and the oats began to turn yellow in the fields, and the nine days' wonder, that had caused so much interest and gossip in the neighborhood was half forgotten.

"I have had a letter from Lawyer D——, Miss Davidson," said the doctor, coming in one morning. "I understand that unless my patient there is married by November fourteenth he loses a fine property. Do you not think it is time that we tried to get a surgeon who would undertake the trepanning operation? There is just one chance in twenty that it may cure him, and I have long given up hopes of any miracle of nature."

"If it does not cure him, it will kill him," said Mary, musingly.

"Yes."

It flashed upon her how entirely impossible it would be for her to decide on such a question. Had she had her will, she would have been content to nurse him—unconscious as he was—for years, rather than run the risk.

"You must decide, doctor," she said.

"Then I will write to Doctor K——to-day. He is the best surgeon in Dublin."

"I will stay by him till the last minute, anyhow," thought poor Mary, rebelliously. She dared not think of what the probable end of her watching was to be.

Two days after, Dr. K—— arrived. He was a short, fat, fussy little man, with strong hands and a clever head. He held a long consultation with the village practitioner, and then declared that he would risk the operation, as there was absolutely no chance for the patient otherwise.

"I must have two capable men to assist me, who won't faint at the sight of blood," he said, in his sharp way. "You'll do for me, doctor; but who else can we get?"

The doctor's eyes fell upon the rector, who had come to take Mary away.

"I will assist gladly," said he simply. "But I came hear to drive Miss Davidson to the station. Is there any one who can do so if I stay here?"

"Who is Miss Davidson?" asked Dr. K—— sharply. "Not the lady, who I am told, has been nursing the patient."

"Yes," the rector answered. "There are important reasons why she cannot possibly continue her functions here."

"Important fiddlesticks!" said Dr. K——. "What is more important than a man's life? Some girlish nonsense and prudery, I suppose. I tell you, sir, if I have not a good nurse on the spot, I won't operate at all. She seems to have a turn that way, and she shall stay. You may go and unharness your trap."

The rector was in a difficulty. Miss Davidson had originally called on him to learn what news he could tell her of Charles Dardas. He had promised her not to betray her visits to the young man, and now he was on the horns of a dilemma.

"I must ask her," he said, nervously.

"I'll ask her," said the surgeon, and threw open the door of the sick-room. "Miss Davidson!" he said, "I am master here at present, being in charge of the case. I must have a good nurse, and they don't grow such commodities in Ballinalack. You must just make up your mind to stay."

Mary looked at the rector. His eyes were cast down, and carefully avoided meeting hers. A slight flush rose on her cheek, and then subsided again leaving it very pale, "Very well, sir, I will stay," she said.

An hour later, all was over—successfully. Mary had sat on the stairs while the men were busy in the sick-room—a mass of quivering nerves, her ears straining to catch the slightest sound. She heard nothing but murmured words, and occasionally the voice of the surgeon speaking sharply. And then at last there was a pause and a great stillness; and after that, came down the stairs to her, as to the prophet Elijah, the sound of a still, small voice. "Mary!" it said.

Then she rushed up the steps and into the room. Charles Dardes was lying on his bed as she had left him—pale and wan—but his eyes were open, and in them again the glorious light of reason. "Thank God! Oh, thank God!" she cried, and fainted, falling on the floor.

"This is your nurse!" said the surgeon with great disgust, looking at the doctor.

The rector stayed with Charles in the evening. Perfect quiet had been enjoyed, and he absolutely refused to reply to any questions the sick man put to him. At last Mr. Dardas gave it up as hopeless, and ceased to worry his brain about time or place. The window was open, and the warm south-west wind stole in and touched his hot forehead like a kiss of peace. By-and-by he dropped into a peaceful and dreamless slumber. When he woke it was dark, and there was a night light burning on the table. By his side sat Mary Davidson, her busy fingers employed in knitting, while her eyes followed the pages of a book on her knees. He watched her for a moment unobserved, and then she looked up, and her eyes met his.

"Mary!" he said.

"Do you want anything?" she asked, standing up, and turning her face from the light to hide the tell-tale blush that mounted in it.

"I want *you!*" he answered. "O Mary! can you ever forgive me? What a fool I have been! Don't go away and leave me, or I shall die!"

"I will not go till morning; I promise you that!" she said. "But you must not talk now; the doctor forbade it. Lie still, and try if you can sleep again."

"I think I can, if I hold your hand!" he said, with a faint smile. "Then I shall know that you are here, and have not left me."

She gave him her soft warm hand, and sat quiet; her face still turned away. He watched her for a while, and then his weary eyes closed again, and he slept.

Great was the surprise of the neighbors when the banns were published of Charles Dardas and Mary Davidson. No one knew who the bride elect was; and the rector, whose kind heart was brimming over with joy, kept his own counsel. To the great disappointment of the people, the time of the wedding was kept a secret, and the ceremony was only witnessed by a few lucky individuals who happened to be in the vicinity of Inny Church when the cars drove up. But the news spread like wildfire; and when the bride and bridegroom left the building, there was quite a concourse of villagers assembled, and whole showers of blessings were heaped on Mary as she passed through them. With the true Irish instinct, they recognized the fact that a change had occurred, and that it promised better things for them all.

Charles Dardas paused at the church door and whispered to his wife. "Mary," he said, "I have not done my duty to these poor people; I have been hard on them, and now I have lost the opportunity of ever repairing the wrong. Do you not think I had better tell them I am sorry, and that if I were their landlord again I would act differently? It is but poor reparation; but I feel I must do it."

"I don't think you need, Charles!" said Mary smiling, "because—because—is not this the 12th of November?"

"Yes; but"——

"O Charles! you never heard that my aunt left me seven thousand pounds when she died, three years ago. Of course, I could not tell you. I waited to see if you wanted me or your uncle's money; and now you will have both! You are not angry with me?"

"Angry!" He took off his hat, and looked solemnly upwards. "May God register my vow, that since He has given me another chance to repair my wrongdoing in the past, I will from henceforth look upon money only as a trust from Him to be used for His service. He has been far more merciful to me than I have deserved."

"That is true, Mr. Dardas," said the rector. "But which of us cannot say the same?"

OCCASIONAL NOTES.

WHAT WE EAT.

A PHYSICIAN, writing on the food necessary to give strength and sustenance, says that if a person uses up his brain, faster than he makes it, he soon becomes nervous and irritable. If he does not assimilate enough food to supply its demands his mind is sure to become weak. The healthiest and strongest individuals, even, should eat far greater proportion of meat than of vegetable food. Beef should be taken as a standard meat. It answers every purpose of the system. Veal and pork are not so easily digested. Pork, so far as its composition goes, is an excellent food for nervous persons, but it is not readily digested. Yet, in the army, we used to think nothing better for the wounded men than bacon. As a rule salt meat is not adapted to the requirements of the nervous individual, as nutritious juices to a great extent go into the brine.

The flesh of the wild birds is more tender and more readily digested than that of domestic ones. This is accounted for by the greater amount of exercise they take, thereby renewing the flesh more rapidly and making it much younger than those of birds which lead a more quiet life. This is a suggestion that might be of benefit to women of sedentary habits, who are desirous of prolonging an appearance of youth. Fish of all kinds is a good food for the nervously inclined. Raw eggs, contrary to the general opinion, are not as digestible as those that have been cooked.

A notion has been prevalent that many persons injure their digestion by eating too much, The fact is that most people don't eat enough. There are more people killed every year by insufficiency of nourishment than by overloading their stomachs. Many of those who do eat a sufficient quantity are prevented by disease from digesting enough for the economy of their systems. The very first thing for any one to do who has exhausted himself by mental work, or who has been born weak and irritable, is to furnish his brain with sufficient nourishment either to repair the damage it has sustained, or to build it into a strong, healthy condition. People in this condition usually suffer from nervous dyspepsia. Their stomachs are unable to perform the labor of assimilation. Owing to the deficient nerve power of the individual, the food lies in the stomach unacted upon by the gastric juice, because there is none, or the quantity is insufficient to have any power. Food, instead of helping to renew the body, and the nervous system with the rest, undergoes fermentation, and the body and brain it should nourish may starve. The person is in a worse state than if the food had not been taken, for the fermentation genarates acid and gas.

Nervous individuals may derive all the fat they need from sugar and starch. It is better, however, for those with weak digestive organs, or whose nerves are in a highly sensitive state, to get it from the animal kingdom than compel their unfeeble stomachs, intestines and pancreas to create it out of these articles. Good bread, sweet butter and meat are the best foods for the nerves.

CHRISTMAS BELLS.

Oh, sweet bells, chiming everywhere,
Waking the keen, blue frosty skies!
Oh, glad day, beaming crystal fair.
Crowning the year that dies!

O'er bird-forgotten vale and glen
Your happy song sounds once again,
Breathing of "Peace good will to men—
Good will to men."

UNDER SUSPICION; OR, THE DEATH MYSTERY.*

By Henry Stoddard.

CHAPTER XII.

THORNTON MAKES INVESTIGATIONS.

PIERCE THORNTON returned to Kenshawe, and they together took a car for Dorchester. Kenshawe conducted Thornton to the house where Mrs. Piermont had resided; both were surprised and disappointed to find it closed and a notification "to let," posted in the window, referring applicants to a broker in the city.

"The bird is flown," ejaculated Kenshawe. "But I declare to you that a week ago the lady occupied this house under the name of Mrs. Morton. Piermont passed as Mr. Morton, her husband. I can trace this further if you doubt me."

"I do not doubt you," said Thornton, thoughtfully. "But now I would prefer pushing my investigations without your assistance. Should I succeed in finding the lady, you shall not go unrewarded for the information you have already rendered me."

Kenshawe did not exactly fancy this, but Thornton did not wish to be associated with a man like Kenshawe any more than was unavoidable, and would not pursue the matter with his assistance.

They separated; Thornton promising that Kenshawe should not suffer by the change of residence. As soon as satisfied that this Mrs. Morton was the person he was in quest of, he would see that Kenshawe had the stipulated amount.

Thornton determined at once to take up the investigation alone and immediately set himself to the task of discovering the destination of the former occupants of the residence to which Kenshawe had conducted him. He decided that it would not be desirable, at first to seek information from the neighbors, and indeed it was very doubtful if they would know anything concerning the people or their movements. We are, as a community, given to minding our own business, and Thornton, aware of this, concluded to look in another direction for the desired information.

He went to the nearest hack-stable and inquired if a carriage had been sent to the house in question at any time within a week or more. Yes, they remembered the occurrence perfectly. The man in the office went to the door and called, "Jerry."

"Jerry is the man that did the job," he explained to Mr. Thornton.

Jerry was industriously washing carriage wheels, but left his work and came forward.

"You did a job down in —— street a week ago?" said the proprietor of the office."

"Yes sir, a lady and gentleman. Took them to the Boston & Albany Railroad station," said the man.

"What day was this?" Thornton asked.

The man of the office referred to his order-book.

"Wednesday," he answered. "In time for the two o'clock train. That's the northern train, sir."

Thornton reflected a moment.

"I am desirous of learning where they went. It seems they have removed to the country," said Thornton. "You have no idea of their destination? You did not see to what place he purchased the tickets?"

"No sir. But I remember the luggage was not checked. It was marked only by the baggage-master. The mark was sixteen, in chalk."

"Thank you, my good man. That will serve every purpose. Sixteen was the station."

Thornton gave the man money for his trouble and left the hack-office.

He returned to the city and went at once to the Boston & Albany Railway depot. He then examined the chart of the railroad and ascertained that station sixteen was L——. He took the first train that left after his arrival at the depot.

It was about four o'clock that he left the cars at the little way-station. There was but one other passenger besides himself. Evidently L—— was not a large place. He walked up to the station-master who was just lowering the signal.

"Can you inform me if a gentleman and lady with some luggage came on this train last Wednesday?" he asked the man, in the quiet way of someone looking for a friend.

* Copyright according to law.

"Yes, sir. Remarked them particularly. My son drove them over to the next town."

"Your son then will know the place and can go there again?" asked Thornton.

"Certainly, sir. Do you wish to be driven over? Mr. Morton was the gentleman's name. He went back to Boston on the last train the same evening."

"Not to-day," said Thornton. "I have got the information I wished for. Can I engage you to carry me to-morrow with another person?"

"Yes, sir. Will you come on this train?"

"Most probably. Can I pay you anything for your trouble?"

"Nothing, thank you, sir. You said you were returning again?"

"Yes; the next train arrives here?"——

"It is in sight, sir," the man answered indicating a cloud of smoke up the track, as he again swung out the signal.

Mr. Thornton congratulated himself on having made far better progress than he had expected. On his return to town he made further inquiries regarding Mr. Morton who had lived in the now vacant house in Dorchester, and from the agent who had the leasing of the place he got the desired information. The description of Mr. Morton agreed exactly with Piermont. He was on the right track it seemed. A few further inquiries put the matter beyond a doubt.

Ralph Egerton had been right, then, in his surmises regarding Piermont and the little Searsport beauty. He would at once acquaint Egerton with the facts he had developed, and with his advice would proceed on the morrow to see the lady who he believed now to be Horace Piermont's wife.

CHAPTER XIII.

CECILE AND MR. THORNTON.

TO say that Ralph Egerton was surprised when Thornton communicated to him the discoveries he had made, and the steps he had already taken with regard to the supposed Mrs. Piermont, would very inadequately convey the idea of his unbounded astonishment.

"Then you have indeed discovered her retreat?" said Ralph, after he had concluded.

"Beyond question. Now the only thing to be considered is how I am to approach this lady. It is rather a delicate matter to go to her and inform her that her husband is false to her, is deceiving her and keeping her from the world that he may consumate a marriage with another woman," said Thornton, quite calmly. "You were acquainted with her, and if you accompany me, I suppose she will then understand that I am speaking the truth and have no intention of injuring her."

"What do you propose doing when you have seen her?"

"I wish to persuade her to come to Miss Rutledge. If she have proof of her marriage, so much the better; if not, I think the force of an interview will place her statements beyond the question of doubt, with Miss Rutledge. I desire the thing should be arranged quietly."

"Now, Thornton, it strikes me, though I was acquainted with her, that it would be a wiser course for you to go accompanied by some lady rather than me. The presence of one of her own sex would give her more reliance in the truth of your words than even one whom she knew," said Egerton.

"Then you have some hidden reason for not wishing to show yourself in this matter," observed Thornton, with a quick penetration of Egerton's reluctance to accompany him. "What is there between this Mrs. Piermont and yourself?"

"Nothing whatever," answered Ralph. "Only I have an idea that she would feel sensitive at having me whom she knew acquainted with her position."

"It would place the affair above suspicion were I accompanied by some unquestionable lady," said Piermont, thoughtfully. "But who could I speak to upon so delicate a matter? It is not a thing that we should wish known to more persons than is unavoidable."

"Why not take Eva's sister, Cecile Rutledge, into your confidence," said Ralph Egerton. "She would enter into the affair heartily, I am sure, for I think she never liked her sister's affianced husband very sincerely."

"Yes; but then Cecile is such a light-headed, thoughtless little creature that I hardly think she would be a suitable person to approach a lady in a matter requiring so much thoughtful delicacy."

"She is a sensible girl for all that," said Ralph, emphatically. "You don't appreciate Cecile, she has many excellent qualities, notwithstanding she says unpleasant things sometimes."

Mr. Thornton acknowledged that she had many good qualities, and that she might have determination enough to understand how to treat Mrs. Piermont, should she go to her. Thornton finally decided to speak with Cecile, and if she could understand how to act, and would assist him, they would go to Mrs. Piermont.

The next morning Thornton called at the Rutledges. Miss Rutledge and Miss Egerton had gone out together, and Miss Cecile Rutledge recieved him. Cecile was secretly glad of the occurence notwithstanding her indignant resentment towards him since the night of the party.

Thornton was not sorry that he found her alone. He at once opened the subject that had brought him.

Cecile, can you keep a secret, and lend me assistance in a matter of grave importance?" he asked her.

"How deliciously mysterious!" she answered, looking at his earnest face in laughing surprise.

"This affair is serious," he said, reprovingly, and nearly concerns your father's family. Do be in earnest for once in your life."

"I am serious," answered Cecile, with a very long face. "Proceed to divulge. I can keep a secret sacredly, I think."

"Cecile, now listen to me. Do not be alarmed, and in any case do not speak of the affair until I give you liberty. Horace Piermont, now engaged to be married to your Sister Eva, I have every reason to believe, am really positive, has a living wife!" said Thornton, speaking almost in a whisper.

"Oh, my goodness gracious!" exclaimed Cecile, in very evident astonishment. "Why, what can have made you think so? It can't be possible!"

"It is true. I wish you to assist me. Will you go with me to Mrs. Piermont, and when you are assured she is indeed his wife, will you bring her here to Eva, that she may be convinced of the fate this man had meditated for her," said Thornton, speaking quickly and earnestly.

"I can hardly realize it," said Cecile, very much sobered by the intelligence. "But I can believe that Horace Piermont might be guilty of even as great a crime as this. I always have distrusted him, for he is hypocritical. He carries a false idea of his character with papa."

"Will you go with me to Mrs. Piermont?"

"Yes; I will do anything to thwart Horace Piermont. The villain! But when?"

"Now. There is no occasion to lose time," answered Thornton, gratified to see she was seriously in earnest,

"Where is she?"

"Some miles from town. The train leaves at two."

"I will speak to mamma. Just tell her I am going with you and will not return until evening,"

She did not mention the object of their visit to her mother. Merely told her she was going with Mr. Thornton, and would return after dinner. Mr. Thornton was intimately acquainted with the family, and Mrs. Rutledge raised no objection to Cecile's accompanying him.

She was in readiness at the proper time when Mr. Thornton called for her, and they were driven to the depot.

Could Mr. Piermont have been aware of their intentions, he would not have met them so complacently as he did when he lifted his hat as Cecile descended the steps to the carriage.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALICE PIERMONT.

THE time was short before Alice Piermont discovered her true position at the new home her husband had provided for her. Her attendants were instructed to obey her slightest wishes, and everything was done by Piermont to insure her happiness under the circumstances. But she soon found that her actions were watched. She could not have communicated with any one had she wished, as the woman who had struck her so unfavorably at first introduction, followed her carefully but at a respectful distance.

She had once or twice thought of writing to her friends, but her feelings still withheld her from revealing the true character, of her husband. Furthermore, her correspondence went to Mr. Piermont before being mailed to the address on the cover. Nothing was permitted to go from her direct to the post-office.

"So you are bribed by my husband to follow me and watch my movements," she said one day to the woman, who called herself Mrs. Kepp.

"Mr. Piermont told me you were to have

your free desires in all things while here," she answered evasively.

"But you were to watch me," said Alice, contemptuously.

"He desired me to attend you, and not lose sight of you lest some harm befell you."

"You have your lesson, it seems," Alice returned. "But you must think me blind that I do not see and understand your movements. If I were to attempt to go to the city would you prevent me?"

"Mr. Piermont said you would not leave here except with him," Mrs. Kepp answered.

"A delicate way of saying I should be locked within my room if I attempted it," said Alice, with a sneer. "But I shall overthrow your vigilant watchfulness yet, notwithstanding all you precautions."

The woman was annoyed at Alice's manner, and determined to keep a closer watch upon her movements lest she put her threat into execution.

Mr. Thornton and Cecile Rutledge, when they alighted from the train at the little way station, found the carriage of the station-master awaiting them.

The boy knew the place they wished to find, perfectly, and drove them at once to the house of Mrs. Kepp.

Arrived there Thornton alighted, and was met by that lady. He assisted Cecile to alight before he asked the question:—

"Is there a Mrs. Morton living here?"

"No such person," answered the woman, shortly. "Don't know any person of that name."

"Well, a Mrs. Piermont," said Thornton, pointedly, and reading in the woman's face that she knew his errand, and was determined he should not see the lady.

"No one here of that name," she said again, sharply.

"I think there is, madam," Thornton answered, nothing daunted by her reply. "You will allow us to enter."

"This is my house, sir. You cannot come into it," said Mrs. Kepp, planting herself firmly in the doorway.

"I do not wish to have recourse to violence," Thornton said, calmly. "But, madam, we must see Mrs. Piermont."

Alice had seen the couple drive up and heard the inquiry. She descended the stairs, and said firmly but calmly:—

"Mrs. Kepp, this gentleman is inquiring for me. You will allow him and the lady to come in."

The woman did not move; but Thornton quietly set her aside while Cecile passed in, and then entered himself.

"When Mr. Morton hears of this he will be very angry. His instructions to me were that you were to see no one," said Mrs. Kepp, raising her voice angrily, but receiving no response.

Alice Piermont showed her guests into her parlor and shut the door. Thornton seated himself near to it.

"Mrs. Horace Piermont, I think?" Thornton said.

"Yes sir," said Alice, in some agitation, wondering what it was the gentleman had come to disclose to her. That it was something concerning her husband she felt convinced.

"My name is Thornton; I am known to your husband. This lady is Miss Cecile Rutledge."

"Rutledge!" said Alice, starting violently. "Are you—the—the Miss Rutledge"—

Thornton took in the position of matters at a glance.

"She is the lady's sister," he said, significantly. "I infer that you know something of Miss Rutledge."

"Yes, sir," said Alice, with some hesitation. "Will you tell me to what I am indebted for this visit?"

"Pardon me, madam, before going further, but allow me to ask if you have a picture of your husband," he said. "If so, allow me to show it to this lady. I assure you that the motive of my making so singular a request is not a bad one."

"I have," Alice said, and tremblingly put it in his hand. The request was an ominous one, she thought.

"You see 'tis the same," he said to Cecile, as he passed it to her.

Cecile lost a little of her color as she saw the face and recognized it.

"Mrs. Piermont," Thornton continued, "it is an unpleasant necessity that brings us here to-day. I am compelled to make a disclosure to you that may startle you seriously. But the welfare of another as well as yourself requires it. Your husband is allowing you to remain in this retired place, while he is on the verge of a marriage with another and an innocent lady. I make this confession to you suddenly, perhaps, but I am assured by your manner that you were not unprepared for it."

"I have known of it for some time," Alice

answered, "but have been powerless to prevent it. It is this lady's sister?"

"Yes."

"My husband has put me here in the care of this unscrupulous woman, so that I am unable to leave this place," continued Mrs. Piermont. "He has also destroyed the only proof of our marriage, so he feels he can defy me to do my worst. He has robbed me of my certificate, and informs me that the clergyman is dead who united us. You see he has me quite helpless, and at his mercy."

"I expected such was the case," said Thornton, calmly. "We have come to request that you will return with us to Miss Rutledge. Your own words will be sufficient to convince her of the truth of what you say, and save her from a fatal union."

"Oh, thank you, sir. I am sure I can rely on your honor, and the lady I am sure is her sister. I will go with you," said poor Alice, in great agitation.

Cecile felt attracted towards the poor, injured and forsaken young creature, and spoke kindly and sympathizingly to her and Alice appreciated it. There was something about Alice peculiarly winning and attractive.

Thornton, seeing how delicately Cecile talked and acted with Alice, was wondrously changed in his regard for her. He saw for the first time that she was vastly more womanly and tender than he had ever given her credit for being. He had certainly misjudged her; she possessed a rarely gentle and sensttive nature.

Alice Piermont returned with Mr. Thornton and Miss Cecile Rutledge that evening to the city.

CHAPTER XV.

FACE TO FACE.

ARRIVED at Mr. Rutledge's, Thornton decided to remain in the reception room until after Alice had been presented by Cecile to Eva. He had the delicacy not to desire to be present when the disclosure was made, so remained here while Cecile and the lady went to the sitting-room where Eva was alone.

Cecile had decided on the best way of breaking it to her sister without wounding her more than was unavoidable, and thought Mrs. Piermont could best impart it to her alone.

Accordingly she presented Alice to her sister as Mrs. Morton, mentioning that she had a communication of serious importance to make to her, which she herself was already acquainted with, and consequently would not remain to hear repeated. She left Alice to tell her story in her own truthful way, convinced that it would carry conviction with it, and returned to Mr. Thornton.

Alice, deeply feeling the embarrassment of her position, but realizing that the disclosure was a painful necessity, made the communication of the unpleasant circumstances as delicately as was possible. She was as considerate of Miss Rutledge's feelings as the nature of her announcement would permit.

She had expected it possible the lady might doubt her statements, or that believing them she would be overcome by the shock. She never for an instant supposed she would receive it in the spirit she did—one of angry and bitter indignation. Her resentment for the injury Piermont had prepared for her, drove from her mind every other feeling.

"The base, black-hearted wretch!" she exclaimed, with a fierce light in her eyes and an angry flush on her cheeks. "He could thus deliberately plot my ruin—my death! Worse than death! Had he succeeded in his villanous scheme he would have paid the penalty, for the severest punishment of the law should have been meted out to him; at any publicity to myself I would have done that!"

Alice looked at her in utter surprise; such resentment as this was something she could not understand. But there was one relief it brought to her; it conveyed to her mind forcibly enough the fact that this woman could never have loved him.

"I thank you for coming to me," Miss Rutledge continued. "You have saved me from this man's wiles. But for your timely revelation, I shudder to think what might have occurred! My poor girl, your position has been even more unhappy than mine. What will you do? Surely not return to the place from which you have just escaped?"

Alice shuddered.

"Not if I can avoid it," she answered.

"You will remain here until Mr. Piermont comes. He will be here shortly. I would like to present you to him," Miss Rutledge said. "Can I prevail on you to remain with me after that? You have rendered me a great service, this would enable

me in a measure to repay my indebtedness. I should hate to have you return to him and the life you have led."

"I thank you, Miss Rutledge," Alice answered. "You are very kind, but it is quite impossible that I could remain with you. I shall, however, never return to Horace Piermont until he acknowledges me openly. I will remain and meet him now; I desire this as much as yourself."

"How could he ill-treat you!" cried Eva, enthusiastically. "I am sure you are so beautiful and lovely, I wonder he could ever have thought of me. You shall not leave us, I will insist that you at least remain until to-morrow."

Alice finally complied to remaining until morning.

Shortly Mr. Piermont came. Eva descended the stairs alone to meet him, and greeted him rather coldly and distantly. He noticed her altered manner and marveled at the cause. He was not long in suspense as to the explanation.

Miss Rutledge mentioned to him that she had a friend she wished to introduce, and he signified his pleasure at forming the acquaintance of any friend of Miss Rutledge's. Eva left the room and presently returned accompanied by Alice.

Piermont rose to his feet, and seeing and recognizing her companion, started in utter consternation, while every vestige of color forsook his face, and as he sank back almost overcome into the chair from which he had risen, gasped out in a voice of trembling fear and confusion:—

"Alice!"

His speech forsook him then for a moment.

"Yes, 'tis she," said Eva Rutledge, sharply. "Your wife, Horace Piermont! Your wife!"

"How did you come here—how escape?" stammered Piermont, in a measure recovered from his agitation.

"She has come in time to thwart you, and save me!" said Eva, her eyes flashing the indignation her words expressed. "With a wife living you have dared to seek to win my love! Horace Piermont, it is well for you your plans did not succeed, for my revenge for such an injury would not have been less than your death!"

Piermont fairly cowered with humilitation and confusion.

"Go! cowardly wretch that you are! Never let me behold your face again!" Eva continued, pointing with her finger to the door. "As for this gentle creature, your wife, it shall be my duty to protect her from you! From ever again falling beneath your power! Leave me; till now I thought it impossible such a monster could exist!"

Piermont sprang upright, his teeth firmly set together, his face haggard in its pallor, but the fierce anger burning in his lurid eyes.

"By heavens, though you be a woman, you shall not thus trample on me!" he cried and advancing quickly to her, he raised his clenched hand to strike this fearless, but fragile and defenceless woman.

There was a scream from Alice who rushed forward as if to defend Miss Rutledge. But the blow was never struck, a hand stronger than hers fell upon his shoulder and sent him reeling half the length of the room.

Pierce Thornton, accompanied by Cecile Rutledge, had quietly entered at this opportune moment.

"I have no words for such as you. Go!" said Thornton, sternly.

Piermont crept from the room in cowardly confusion.

"That is the being you have loved!" Thornton could not refrain from saying. "I wish you good-evening. I leave Mrs. Piermont in your charge."

It was a voice of scorching sarcasm that pronounced these words, and Eva Rutledge comprehended their import in humiliation. She remembered the time when she had made her choice between the two men. She could see now with an aching heart and sense of deepest shame, the superiority which she had mistaken before.

He left her, bowing with perfect ease and almost studied grace. The manner was to her an added torture.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN ENGAGEMENT.

MISS RUTLEDGE eventually succeeded in persuading Alice Piermont to remain her guest for a time, until she had quite decided what course to take. Eva felt singularly drawn towards Alice, in a manner she could not account for, though she had a most winning disposition.

The presentation to the family, after Eva had made the necessary explanations, was a

rying ordeal for the young creature, wholly unaccustomed to society as she was, but she deported himself in a manner that at once secured the regard and sympathy of all. They considerately treated her in a manner that disarmed her embarrassment and quite placed her at her ease.

It was only Eva, and only when they were alone together, who touched upon the matter that had so nearly proven fatal to both. Miss Rutledge could now talk of the affair calmly.

"And you will never return to him, unless he seeks you and openly acknowledges you as his wife?" Eva asked.

"No; but I am certain he will come. He will soon realize the lengths to which his own folly has led him, and then he will repent his treatment of me, and return to me."

"You can have faith in him, and love him still?" Eva continued. "His treatment of you has not killed your regard for him! You must be more than human—I cannot understand it."

"I think it was not because he did not love me," said Alice, thoughtfully. "It was your wealth that made him seek you. I think he always loved me in spite of it all. He did everything for my comfort that he could without giving me my liberty and acknowledging me to the world. Had you really loved him you could better understand my feeling for him."

Miss Rutledge thought of this. It looked almost like a revelation. It seemed she had not loved Piermont; she had been deceiving herself all this time. Her feeling had been a fancy, an admiration for a handsome face and graceful manner, a feeling all on the exterior; the wound did not reach her heart, for her regard had not been so deep.

There was to her another awakening. She saw with vivid distinctness the contrast between Piermont and Thornton as she had seen it that evening; when one, in his superiority, towered above the other cringing at his feet. She felt from that moment which man she could adore for life—and it was not Horace Piermont. She was blind not to have seen this before. Others did so. Cecile had always admired him and detested Piermont. She felt that she could love Pierce Thornton—that she loved him already.

How this would have affected Thornton could he have known it, we cannot say, but the late occurrences and developments had set him to reflecting, also. There was Cecile! she had certainly displayed phases of character he had never supposed she possessed. He had never appreciated her, as Egerton had once told him. Notwithstanding the light manner she had of talking, she certainly had many qualities which her sister lacked. He had been willfully blind and prejudiced, he acknowledged it now to himself. He found Cecile Rutledge's piquant face obtruding itself into his thoughts very frequently thereafter.

Marcia Egerton returned home and was met by a surprise. Her father informed her, with some reluctance of manner, that he had contracted an engagement of marriage with Mrs. Witherbee. It was not to be publicly announced just at present—it would not have exactly a pleasant association with the recent death of his son—but their marriage was fixed for a day about a year subsequent. He urged that Marcia should at once pay a visit to the Witherbees.

Marcia was greatly surprised and not pleased. She, however, did not displease her father by an expression of her feelings. She went to the Witherbees in a few days.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

TIME slipped away, and with it came many changes. Mr. Edward Egerton had married the interesting widow, Mrs. Witherbee, and she and Isabel were of course permanently located at Mr. Egerton's pleasant home. In Isabel, Marcia found a most genial companion, and their friendship could not have been closer had they indeed been sisters.

Ralph Egerton was still a stranger from his own home—still under suspicion. Isabel, with his father, still in her heart believed him guilty.

The detective employed by Mr. Egerton to "sift the case" had long ago given it up as hopeless. It would seem the mystery of Clement Egerton's death was always to remain a mystery.

The time looked forward to so anxiously by Alice Piermont came at last. Horace Piermont came to her a penitent man. He had already publicly declared their marriage, and it was no secret, nor their separation, either. She received him with open arms. They left the city for the West immediately after the reconciliation.

Pierce Thornton was not long in realizing that he had conceived a sudden and deep affection for Cecile Rutledge, and she was gratified to receive his very pointed visits and attentions. It came to a declaration finally, as a matter of course, and Pierce Thornton found himself considerably embarrassed before this girl whom he had once hardly condescended to notice at all.

"Cecile, you can be serious when the occasion requires," he said, when breaking the ice to the avowal of his love; "and I beg you will seriously consider the words I will now speak to you. Cecile, though I know I am not what your romantic fancy would admire, I have permitted myself to love you with my whole soul. Think of what it is I offer you, when I ask you to become my wife! the faithful love of an honest heart. Do not regard it lightly—there are other things to be thought of than mere outward attractions or a handsome face. I am blunt and not handsome or elegant by any means, but I love you truly. Can you love me Cecile?"

"Now Mr. Pierce Thornton," Cecile began, in a voice, to say the least, that astonished that gentleman, "it has been your custom for a long time past to regard me as a little foolish simpleton, with no appreciation beyond a handsome pair of eyes or a mustache, and I would now like you from this moment forth to disabuse your mind of any such impression. For, let me assure you I am capable of better things. As regards your very polite declaration, I do not see how it would be possible for us to make a match of it since"— There was a lurking mischief in her eyes as she said this—"'The antipathy is mutual with the second Miss Rutledge and myself' *et cetera*."

Cecile repeated this with an air that brought his own words back to him in humiliating remembrance. His face became sadly grave and shadowed.

"Are you in earnest, Cecile? Is this to be my answer?"

"No, my dear old fellow!" she answered, blushing brightly and hiding her crimsoned face in his embrace. "I love you dearly."

They neither of them ever regreted their choice, and were married after a short engagement. Eva Rutledge suffered a sharp pang of jealous pain when Cecile told her of their engagement, but no one knew her secret, and she smiled her pleasure to her happy sister.

There is an old proverb about "Murder will out," which, though perhaps not applicable to the circumstances, still occurs to our mind in connection with the final knowledge of the facts attending Clement Egerton's mysterious death.

The gambler, Kenshawe, upon his deathbed gave to the world the secret which he alone had kept so long. He dictated a letter to Mr. Edward Egerton, which was sent to that gentleman with an enclosure. The purport of the letter was the following.

On the morning of the discovery of Clement Egerton's body upon the floor of his chamber, when Kenshawe went with Mr. Egerton and his son Ralph to the room, he (Kenshawe) discovered what no one else saw; upon the table a letter addressed in the hand of the dead man to his father. The letter was enclosed with his confession.

Clement Egerton was a suicide! The note to his father was short and made this confession, but without assigning the reason.

Kenshawe had a feeling of resentment against Ralph Egerton for his words to him at the club-house, and somehow, foreseeing that if he suppressed this letter suspicion would fasten upon Ralph, he had taken his revenge in that way.

This was a great relief as well as a surprise to Edward Egerton. The thought had never occured to any one that Clement might have committed suicide, but this decided the matter beyond question.

Mr. Egerton keenly felt his unjust suspicions of his younger son. He immediately recalled him to his home.

A full explanation followed, and the father's former prejudice passed forever with their reunion.

Isabel Witherbee suffered, if possible, no less than the father from her injustice to the innocent man, but she sought him in deep penitence and asked his forgiveness. It was granted freely, joyously.

They were reconciled and married very shortly. The future proved to Ralph that in spite of what had passed, she loved him truly. The shadow passed as if it had never been, and in the years to come, when the "Death Mystery" was a mystery no longer, he could scarcely realize that he had ever been "Under Suspicion."

[The End.]

FACE TO FACE!

SINGULAR ADVENTURE WITH A LION IN INDIA.

AT Nellur, on the west shore of the Gulf of Bengal, I went out with a party of British officers to search for a man-eater who had created great devastation to the west. He had, indeed, driven most of the natives out of a section five miles square, and the number of people it was said he had eaten was above twenty. The tiger's lair was in a large thicket which backed against the coast range of mountains. In the midst of this thicket was an old ruin, and the beast probably had his bed there. There were ten of us in the party, including natives, and we had begun to beat up the thickets when I stepped into a hole and wrenched my ankle. That settled me, for the day at least, and I was assisted back to camp, which was about half a mile from the thicket. A sort of easy chair was made for me at the foot of a tree, and one of the natives was left to attend to my wants. I heard the hunters beating up the game, but the pain took away my interest in the hunt. I had my boot off, and the man was softly rubbing my ankle with brandy, when all of a sudden he fastened his eyes on something behind me, and his face became terror stricken.

"What is it—a snake?" I whispered.

"No—the tiger!" he gasped, in reply.

"Is he close at hand?"

"Not fifty feet away, sahib, and looking right at us!"

My gun was ten feet away, and we were perfectly helpless. Overhead was safety, but before I could reach my feet and pull myself up by a branch the tiger would have me.

"Can you catch the branch over your head?" I asked of the native.

"Yes, sahib, but I cannot leave you."

"Save yourself if you can, or we shall both be knocked over. If you spring into the tree the tiger may be frightened off by your action."

The man straightened up and made a spring, and the next instant was safe in the branches. He was hardly quiet before I heard the tread of the tiger in the dry grass a few yards away, and the native whispered:—

"Say your prayers, sahib; he is here!"

In a few seconds the tiger came up. I was lying at full length, my head considerably higher than my feet, and so I saw his every move. He looked me full in the face and uttered a low growl; but it was not one of anger. I saw that the beast was full of curiosity and wonder, and hope sprang up in my heart. He sniffed at my right hand, which lay beside me, passed his nose down to my injured foot, and the fumes of the brandy seemed to delight him. He lay flat down and began to lick my foot and ankle. His tongue was hot as fire and as rough as a cow's, and I winced now and then in spite of my efforts not to. It was something new for the man eater, and he was delighted, He licked away until I thought he had taken all the skin off, and then he rolled over and over on the blanket, as you have seen a cat do after feeding.

"The hunters and beaters had been quite all this time having come together for counsel, but now they began to shout and tom-tom, and the noise came down to us very distinctly. The tiger sat up and sniffed the air and growled. A gun was fired and he growled again, looked up at the native in the tree, around the camp, and down at me, and then deliberately walked off into the woods. Next day he was routed out of his lair by the beaters, and, without being wounded or unduly angered, he charged among them with great ferocity, and killed two and wounded a third.

Eighteen months later, in the Bengalese district, I went out to a village called Manday with two officers, to see if we could not rid the neighborhood of a man eater who had as bad a reputation as the other. The beast was so bold that he entered the village almost nightly, invariably coming and going by a certain route. The nights were bright moonlight, and when the sun went down we commanded the people to keep quiet and took up the stations selected to cover the approach. I was the nearest to the huts —indeed, I was seated beside one of the huts which had been vacated by its terror-stricken owner. The next man was one

hundred and fifty feet away, and the next two hundred. We had planned for a converging fire on one particular spot.

The tiger had always appeared between nine and ten o'clock. Ten o'clock came and we had seen nothing of him. I pulled out my watch again, and had just noted that it was twenty minutes after ten when I heard a loud purring close to my ear, and next instant the man eater was beside me. The shock was so sudden that I almost fainted, and there must have been a full minute when I was unconscious of what was going on. On the ground beside me was a large red silk handkerchief. When I could realize what was passing the tiger was playing with that, exactly as a cat would. He tossed it up, caught it, pulled it along the ground, and for three or four minutes he had great fun. When he was through he rubbed against me and purred, and with my left hand I smoothed his back. The old fellow purred louder and louder, but after a moment some noise in the village disturbed him, and he uttered a loud growl and walked off without even turning his head. Five minutes later he attempted to leap into the window of a hut, got caught in the small opening, and we killed him while he was thus held a prisoner. There was a witness as to what happened between the tiger and myself. Unknown to me, one of the hunters had slipped back to one of the huts for a drink of water, and he saw the tiger skulking along between the huts, having entered the village by a new route. He was not over forty feet from us as the beast made himself so agreeable.

Captain Stevens of the Bengal infantry was on one occasion waiting in a ravine for a shot at a tiger which the beaters were trying to drive out of a thicket, when the beast approached him from behind. Its presence was not known until it uttered an uneasy whine. When the captain whirled around he could put his hand on the beast. He was greatly upset for the moment, during which the tiger smelled of his legs several times and licked his long boot legs which had been freshly oiled that morning. After three or four minutes, the beaters coming nearer with their confusion, the tiger uttered a low growl and trotted off, and fifteen minutes later tore a native all to pieces.

While in the lion country on the Cape of Good Hope a party of thirty of us were one day crossing a sandy plain. We were not within a mile of the woods, and it was the hottest hour of the day. A sudden cry was raised, and a big lion came charging us across the hot sands. He came from the woods, and that without the slightest provocation on our part, and he came for blood. A dozen of us fired at him, and he was hit twice before he reached us, but he came right ahead, and had knocked a native down and was standing over him when he got his quietus. He was an immense fellow and well along in years. We tried to find some explanation of his conduct, and finally concluded that he had been hunted and perhaps wounded and had become reckless and desperate.

I once had such an alarm from a lion as to send me to bed for a couple of days. We were riding on a strip of sand with the heavy forest at our right and a scattering line of bushes on our left, when our attention was called to something skulking in the bushes. We dismounted, three of us, and crept forward, scattering as we went. I made for a bush, whence I hoped to secure a better observation, and, as I turned it, being on my hands and knees, I came face to face with a big lion who was skulking in a hollow, I was within four feet of his head when I discovered him. His eyes were open very wide, and his breath came to me with sickening odor, but he neither growled nor moved for a long minute. We looked into each other's eyes, and I was so overcome that I was like one paralyzed for the time. At that short distance his eyes had the brightness of electric lights. Indeed, they seemed to burn mine, and the feeling did not leave me for four or five days.

After a minute or so the lion uttered a low growl, and sat up for a better look at me. I was on my knees, and he sniffed at me and uncovered his great teeth. Perhaps another might have fired at him, as his big head and chest offered a target like a barn door, and I had my gun ready, but I hadn't the power to raise my arms. He growled again, and then turned around and sneaked off through the bushes and got away. When my companions came up I was too weak to walk to my horse, and on reaching camp I had to go to bed.

TWO DAYS IN A BRASS KETTLE.

By Louise Dupee.

"DELPHINY, your contrary-mindedness ez a wearin' me inter my grave, but if yer don't want to try on yer weddin' dress, you kin wear it a fittin' you good or bad for all me," said Mrs. Long, or the "Widder Sam," as she was called by the neighbors, regarding her pretty daughter ruefully over her silver-trimmed spectacles. "I never see a girl make sech a tender about gettin' married, an' there ha'n't a likelier nor a genteeler man in the hull keounty then the elder," she continued excitedly.

"That's so," said Mrs Sampson, the dressmaker, breaking her thread with the force of her conviction, "he ha'n't one of them shifless kind that preaches fur pork 'n' taller candles, out of folkses sullars 'n the store, but jest sets up for his pay in money like anybody else, and he gits it, tew," the widow went on. "Mis' Isril Baker don't git no chance to charge the gospil fur a tub o' soft soap when he's consarned, I tell you. He's got ez good a farm as there is in the state, 'n' a frame-house ez snug 'n' neat ez yaou please. He's a goin' to put up a front yard fence tew, come spring, he tole me so the other day,"

"But I detest the man, mother," said the slender, dark-eyed girl, whose brows wore anxious lines, but whose clear brave eyes shone with a determined light which boded ill for the success of her mother's plans. "I have told you over and over again that I would never marry him. Still, if it will be any satisfaction to you, I will try on the dress."

"You're talkin' nonsense, Delphiny. You know ez well ez I dew thet the weddin'-day ez fixed fur day after tewmorror, 'n' tewmorror the elder's a comin' up with his friend Elder Knight. Miss Sampson brougt me word, by way of Seth Perkins. I can't say I'm sorry 't is so soon, nuther, fur you ha'n't been a consolin' darter tew me no way. The 'cademy edication 'at I gin you hez only set yeou up fore yeour folks, 'n' when I lay myself eout fur yeour own good, 'n' I will thet yeou shell marry genteel 'n' inkew the gospil, yeou go 'n' get yur mind sot on a young feller thet ha'n't got nothin' but store clothes 'n' a sarcy 'n' a dretful glib tongue to reckermend him. A kind o' furriner, tew, livin' away off up in Canada, with the Lord only knows what kin' 'ur a bringin' up. The elder said I did wrong when I harbered sich a character under my roof, fur idleness is the mother ev vice, 'n' he spent two hull months a doin' nothin' but huntin' and fishin' with a plenty of sly courtin' thrown in when my back was turned I 'spose proberaly."

"The affections ken not allus be kept in curb, Mis' Sam Long," remarked Miss Sampson, drawing down her long, thin face to accord with the sigh which heaved her sympathetic bosom.

"What is merridge without love?" she inquired dramatically, with a pitying glance at the poor girl who looked so pale over the wedding finery.

"Cat's foot about love," ejaculated the indignant widow. "I've hed two desp'rate good husbands myself, 'n' there wasn't nothin' so silly as bein' in love inter the bargain. Love ha'n't houses nor land nuther." And she tossed a handful of shreds which she had carefully plucked from the neat rag carpet, and hurled them energetically out of the window, as if she would thus dispose of this troublesome emotion for Delphine in particular and the world in general.

"It wouldn't make any difference if I had never seen Tom, mother, nothing would induce me to marry Elder Taylor if there wasn't another man in the world." And Delphine hastily removed the stone-colored silk gown which had been chosen by the united heads of her mother and three aunts as suitable for a preacher's bride, and left the room.

The wide kitchen door was open, overlooking sunny fields and the blue gloom of far-stretching pine woods. She stood there a few moments with her hands clenched tightly together and with almost despairing eyes which were fixed on the road which wound beyond the fields like a brown thread into the hilly distance.

"Oh, why doesn't Tom come?" she said, half aloud. "He must have got my

letter in time, or can it be he wasn't at home when the letter reached Stanford? I will not believe that he is the faithless, deceiving villain which mother and all the rest of the family declare him to be. Oh, no! something must have gone wrong, or he would certainly have been here by this time to save me from this dreadful marriage. What shall I do? I know the letter must have gone safely, for I did not intrust it to the care of our post-master, nor to the stage-driver, for they are both in league with my relatives. I walked five miles to post it myself, and saw it deposited in the mail-bag with my own eyes. What can be the meaning of this silence? Sometimes I think I shall go mad. But there is no time to be lost. If he does not come to-night, I must go away. I must hide somewhere until the elder shall have come and gone. But where shall I go? There isn't a neighbor who would dare to shelter me for fear of incurring my mother's displeasure, or through awe of the elder, and I haven't a single relative who isn't on the side of the enemy. I suppose I might exist for a while in the woods. Better die of exposure than marry that dreadful man. But then Tom might make his appearance, and I must be near, near enough to see or hear him at the very first moment of his approach. Isn't there some nook in the barn where I might conceal myself? But"— Delphine's eyes stared about her as she spoke, and through the open door which led into what was called the back-room, they fell upon a huge brass kettle which was suspended from the rafters overhead.

What a hiding-place this would be! Surely the kettle was large enough to conceal a small body entirely from view, at least in a stooping position, and if the great iron nail which held it was driven into the beam firmly enough to bear her weight in addition to the kettle, there was nothing more to be thought of. From her lofty perch she would be able to look down upon all the proceedings which her disappearance might occasion, witness all the comings and goings, hear much that was said, and what was better there was a view of the road through the great chink in the wall which was in a direct line with the ancient vessel, and she would be able to see the stage the moment it came in sight over the brow of Carter's Hill.

There was no one about. Her mother was safely seated at her sewing in the sitting-room, and Barbary, the hired girl was in the meadow picking cranberries. Delphine climbed upon a high bench which was placed along the wall, and from there, by dint of considerable scrambling, succeeded in making a trial of the brass kettle as a shelter.

It was perfection. Its shining depths seemed really capacious, for she was the tiniest of women, and its gigantic pail was as steady and unconscious as if it held nothing less innocent than the famous cider-apple sauce which her mother stewed in it every year. There was no danger of its being called into requisition, for the apple-sauce time was not yet and who would think of searching the interior of a kettle for a runaway bride! How she blessed her grandmother for having such a kettle! How she blessed her grandmother, who worshiped it, for having bequeathed it to her mother, who prized it so highly that she refused to lend it to a neighbor even in the exigencies of sugar-making; for fear that it might recieve ever so slight a dent on its thick, smooth side. It was made in the old, old days of huge chimneys, of which there were none in this comparatively new country, and so it could only be used out-of-doors, suspended gypsy-fashion over a brush-wood fire.

The pleasantest associations were already connected with the old kettle to Delphine. The woods in the blue, melting days of spring, the trickling of the sap, the ruddy glow and merry creakle of the fire when the weird twilight crept over the merry toitering sugar-makers and warned them that it was time to go home.

Mornings when the orchard was the scene of a gay bonfire, and the kettle bubbled over into the grass, and the neighbors came over to test the apple-sauce, and the smoke blew off in such fairy-like rings through the branches of the trees. Tom was there at the last apple-stewing, she remembered, and they went out where the kettle was still suspended over a pile of rosy embers, when the pale, new moon rose like a dream over the dark blue fringes of the pine woods, and dropped glittering beams, until its depths shone like burnished gold. Tom said it reminded him of the enchanter's caldron in an old fairy-story, made of pure gold and huge enough to cook the dinner of the whole kingdom at the same time, and

now if it would only hold her safely until he came, it would be a veritable enchanter's kettle. She knew that her mother would never relent in her determination that she should marry the elder, that prayers and tears would be of no avail, and absence was the only means of escape.

It was stage night that evening, and with a feverish anxiety, Delphine watched the approach of the lumbering old vehicle as it appeared over the brow of the hill. But Tom had not come. A lumberman in a red shirt; going on to the bend, and an old lady, who, when the stage stopped at the postoffice opposite, didn't know where she was bound, were the only passengers it contained.

The wedding-dress was finished, even to the prim lace ruches at the neck and wrists. The neighbors came in to get a peep at it, and to discuss the coming events with animated interest. Delphine's behavior quite satisfied her mother. She was rather silent, but assisted without remonstrances in all preparations for the festivities, and received the many allusions to her marriage as a matter of course. She even smiled at some sly joke touching the elder's devotion.

She retired early that night, but not to sleep. The household would be astir at an unusually early hour in the morning, for a rigorous baking was to usher in the day which was to bring the bridegroom. She counted the slow hours until the old kitchen clock struck three, then arose and made preparations for her sojourn in the brass kettle. She attired herself in the garments which had been prepared for her wedding journey, bonnet and all. That the family might suppose that she had sought a much more remote hiding-place, she purloined a moderate supply of provisions from the pantry and stored them away under the eaves, which were within reaching distance from her perch, then hearing a slight noise overhead, she climbed hastily into the kettle and stowed herself carefully in its brassy depths.

The position was not wholly comfortable, but as it was not necessary to keep her head bowed unless footsteps were approaching, or the room was occupied by some member or members of the family, it was by no means unendurable. The most unpleasant feature of the case, was the kettle's tendency to swing at her slightest movement, and if the day should prove to be warm as yesterday, Barbary would be likely to remain there a large portion of the time, for she liked to get away from the kitchen fire to beat her eggs and stone her raisins in the coolness of the open door, to have a little private gossip with Seth, the hired man, which was seldom possible in the kitchen, the common sitting-room of the family as is the usual custom in the region.

There was a frosty chill in the air now, but the sky was clear and cloudless. Delphine could see blue bits of it with the pale ghost of the moon on its surface, through the chinks in the unplastered wall, and the sun would ere long, sweep broadly and warmly through the September fields. The cocks were crowing lustily in the barn-yard, and though there was scarcely a suspicion of daylight, yet the birds commenced to twitter and chirp in the orchard trees.

Seth came down with his lighted lantern, and passed through the room on his way to the barn. Then she heard Barbary's newly kindled fire crackle in the kitchen, and her mother's brisk voice in its usual high-pitched baking-day key. Delphine's heart beat rather loudly when Barbary came to peel her potatoes at the bench, over which she and the brass kettle was suspended.

"What's up this mornin' that breakfast is under way so airly? 'Ta'n't washin'-day nor bakin'-day ez fur's I ken katilate," said Seth, appearing again with his lantern.

"We're a goin' tew bake though, ef 'ta'n't Wednesday nor Saturday. Sich things dew happen sometimes, 'specially when a hull haouse is upset by a weddin'. Didn't you know, Seth Thompson, that tomorrow's Delphiny's weddin'-day?"

"Wall, yis, but I shouldn't ha' 's'posed that even thet would ha' thrown Mis' Sam off the track, 'specially in her haouse-keepin' rules, fer ef Mis' Sam ha'n't sot, she ha'n't nothin'. The elder does eat uncommon lively, though; preachin' ez wonderful in givin' a feller a appetite, 'n' ef she a gone to her ten elders fer ter board for a day or so, I don't wonder she's sot up a bakin' ef it was Sunday."

"I did think, Seth," whispered Barbary with an uneasy glance toward the kitchen door, "I did think thet Delphiny wouldn't give in to her ma, 'baout marryin' the elder. Did you know how awful sot she was agin it? 'Pears tew me the gal acts kind er queer, naow; tew resigned like all of a sudden. I shouldn't wonder ef somethin' was a goin' to happen thet ha'n't looked fur,"

biting a red apple with significant tightness.

"Sho!" exclaimed Seth, dropping his capacious pan, and opening his pale blue eyes to their widest extent. "I want to knaow!"

"Barbary, I wish you'd run up-stairs 'n' call Delphiny, she'd orter know enough to git up without bein' called this mornin', but I ha'n't heard nothin' of her yit," said the sharp voice of the mistress of the house in the open doorway.

Barbary made an awful sign, which meant keep silent, to Seth, and disappeared on her errand.

"She's up already," she reported, returning in a few moments. "Perhaps she came down the front way, 'n' ez a clearin' up the settin'-room, as 't wasn't put ter rights last night."

"Delphiny," called Mrs. Long, lustily, "Delphiny, where be you? I warn't you."

But there was no response, and after repeated searching and calling, the lady finally decided that her daughter must have run over tew "Coroline's to git the snow-drop table cover, which she promised to lend for the important occasion, so near at hand. Caroline said we'd got to send for it early, 'coz she was goin' tew the Corner, to spend the day, but there wasn't no need of sich dretful hurry. The stage don't start till half-past six," she remarked as she rigorously turned the crank of the coffee-mill. Barbary, still stationed under the brass kettle, sniffed loudly.

Delphine heard it, and quaked with fear, for Barbary never sniffed without meaning. She gave utterance to volumes in this peculiar, rasping, uncouth sound. Even her mother winced before it, and Seth, a lover, who hoped and despaired by turns, was driven to the verge of suicide when it was directed toward himself. Could it be possible that those sharp eyes had discovered her hiding-place?

Mrs. Long whisked into the kitchen, slamming the door after her. Barbary turned toward Seth, who was listlessy preparing food for a sick cow, and slowly, carefully opened her mouth.

"Ruther queer 't Delphiny should put on her travlin' dress 'n' her best bonnet two go over t' Aunt Caroline's to borrer a table kiver!"

"Sho! what a marster han' fur katilatin' you be, Barbary!"

"But you jist keep dark. Let Mist' Sam find eout herself, she's baound tew afore long, but I hope 't won't be till the pore girl gits well eout the way. I don' know ez I'se ever 'spressed my 'pinion freely afore, but I ha'n't no doubt but thet there elder, piousity 'n' all, ez a reglar old crokerdile, Miss Sam she's so masterful she runs on an idee, 't Delphiny wouldn't dare go agin her commarnds 'n' run away tew git rid of marryin' him. He may be kivered over with the gospil shell, but lor, there ha'n't no more gospil inside or him then there ez inside the skin or a puff ball,"

"O Lordy," exclaimed Seth, aghast at such bold heresy.

"Well, there ha'n't no time to stan' here a talkin'. But there's fun ahead when the elder gits along, you'd better bleeve," And the two went their separate ways, leaving the room, to Delphine's relief, quite empty.

She raised her head, and peeped out-of-doors through the chink in the wall. It was a beautiful morning. The sun, with its great sheaves of light, was just bursting from the rosy east, a fresh breeze fluttered out at the same time as if it were the breath of this glorious new-comer, and stirred everything with joy, leaves, shadows, woods, flowers, and the quaint wind-mill that an old farmer from Canada had built on the height. A robin came and sang in the apple-bough which brushed the eaves in notes as clear and dewy as spring a little song of hope and trust. It was summer yet, but winter was looking out of the corollas of the frost flowers and lurked under the drifts of fallen leaves. A crew of red-shirted lumbermen were moving hilariously along the moist, brown road toward the river, and some harvesters employed by her mother were coming up the lane which led to the house, with their scythes on their shoulders.

An appetizing odor of coffee crept to her nostrils. Barbary blew the breakfast horn merrily, from the back-door, and there was a great clatter both of dishes and tongues. Delphine rather liked looking out on the world from the brass kettle.

An hour or so passed by, and she was still alone in the back-room. Seth has harnessed old Dolly, and driven rapidly down the road toward the corner. Aunt Caroline's small boy had rushed in breathlessly, bearing the snow-drop table-cloth, and Delphine knew, by the sounds that reached her ear,

that her absence was occasioning great alarm, and that her mother was somewhat excited to say the least. Still it was evident that the baking was progressing, for the oven door creaked incessantly, and there was a persistent whisking of eggs and grating of nutmegs. But finally these sounds ceased. Seth drove hurriedly home again, and was anxiously interrogated at the door. Then Barbary's pink sunbonnet careered wildly up the lane, the harvesters were called in, and there was a great rushing to and fro.

But the door which opened into the kitchen, if left ajar, was immediately closed by the wind, so little or nothing of the conversation reached her ears.

At noon she saw the two elders approaching the house in a lofty and ancient wagon drawn by a solemn and angular horse. Elder Taylor, the expected bridegroom, wore a bran-new stove-pipe hat which outshone the sun, a solemnly elegant black broadcloth suit, which hung upon his long, lean figure like the garments of the most serene scarecrow that inhabited the grain-field below, and the speckless white cravat tied in a bow, whose like for size and precision was never seen in this region. His appearance seemed to astonish even the clear and placid atmosphere, for it immediately thickened and became filled with a sultry mist. His friend, Elder Knight, whose features and figure were both after the same pattern, though less severe, but even more angular, looked like his shabby and relenting ghost. Delphine concluded it was time to take a little refreshment, and reaching for a cookie ate it with ~~composure.~~ her teeth.

"How does the elder take it?" inquired Seth of Barbary when they met in Delphine's neighborhood, an hour or so afterward.

"He's mad as a hornit. I heerd him a sayin' suthin' under his breath, thet sounded purty much like profanity', 'n' them gray eyes o' his flashed jest like a pane or glass with a candle sot behind it. I allers knowed he hed a dretful temper. The other elder up, 'n sez ef he warz in prayer-meetin'. 'This ez a very solumn occashun,' 'n' thet seemed to rile the bridegroo n more and more. He sez as haow he's a goin' to seek out that poor misguided giurl." imitating his tone to perfection, "'n' if she hez been 'ticed away by thet ungodly 'n most worldly young man, Thomas Barrinton, he will seize her from his pollutin' presence, 'n' bear her safe tew the arms ov her distracted ma!"

"Mis' Sam is a leetle two scairt two be so dretful mad, a'n't she?"

"Wall, yis, I s'pose she is a purty scairt, she's got a mother's feelin's after all; but, lor'! nothin' ha'n't happened to Delphiny. She's able tew teke keer ov herself, ef ever a girl wus. She's jest hid away somewheres, sometimes I think she ha'n't so fur off, tell the elder gits himself off again. P'r'aps she got word to thet other feller, 'n' he's met her somewheres 'n' took her off to get merried. The Lord only knows! Why don't the elder merry Mis' Sam, herself? It's plain t' be seen as a meetin'-haouse on a hill, thet et's property he's after, 'n' though she ha'n't got quite's much 's Delphiny will hev, she's got a pooty bigglice, I kin tell yaou."

"Dolly, would any feller dast to ask her?" inquired Seth, aghast at the very idea of such a trial.

The day wore slowly along. Delphine longed for the friendly darkness of night, that she might relieve her aching and cramped limbs by a change of position. If she were only able to stand even for a few moments what a relief it would be. But she scarcely dared to lift her head over the brim of the kettle for fear that some one might appear suddenly upon the scene, and everything be lost.

Late in the afternoon she became aware that the house was overflowing with aunts who had evidently assembled from the various neighborhoods, for the purpose of consolation and council. They were sitting in solemn conclave in the kitchen, her weeping mother the centre of the group. Roly poly Aunt Polly, who was always too warm, opened the door which led into her domain, and when the lamp was lighted, she ventured to peep down from the dusk of the rafters where she swung and survey the scene.

"Lor,' Eunus!" said Aunt Polly, whose round, rosy face, drawn down that it might better accord with trouble, looked like that of a homesick kitten, "nothin' dretful ha'n't happened to Delphiny. She's only jest run away, thet's all, she takes after her ma in being pretty masterful, 'n' when she said she wouldn't never marry the elder, hes meant it, 'n' I s'pose she thought thet waz the only way to git eout of it."

"Right, Aunt Polly," Delphine came

near saying aloud. But the sight of her mother's tears moved the girl. Tears were so out of character with the hard, worldly woman. She had never seen her weep before. "Poor mother," she said to herself, "she must suffer to allow herself to exhibit what she would condemn as so much weakness in another. Perhaps I ought to marry the elder, after all, since she has set her heart upon it to such an exent."

But, no, on the second thought, it was not her duty, it could not be her duty, to sacrifice both herself and Tom because her mother's will ordained that it should be so. There was neither justice nor reason in it. Her mother would, herself, see the right some day. The elder was not only personally repulsive; but he was of a cold, hard, grasping nature, ignorant, bigoted, domineering. To live with him would be worse than death.

"I can't help being afeard that she's gone 'n' drownded herself in the river," replied this affected mother in subdued tones, "she's ez like her poor dead father ez tew peas in some ways, 'n' he was always kinder reckless 'n' desperate ef things didn't go to suit him."

"Reckless and desperate I should think," exclaimed Aunt Loisy, the indignant sister of the deceased. "Some folks wouldn't wonder at some folks bein' kinder desperate. A husban"s a dretful reality, anyhow, 'n' a husban' you don't keer fur ez wuss. Pore girl! if she'd had a father she wouldn't ha' come to this."

The three other aunts were so startled by this outburst, that each dropped a stitch in her knitting work and drew a long breath and glared at the bold speaker in utter silence.

The widow's eyes flashed through her tears, but the only reply she deigned to give, was to rise with great dignity, and place her chair so that she should be seated with her back squarely to the offender.

"What's the elder a goin' t' dew?" questioned Aunt Jane after this very emphatic pause.

Delphine strained her ears to hear the reply to this direct question. It was just what she wished to inquire herself.

"He says it's his dooty to find her in spite of everything, for fear, if she ha'n't a'reddy, she should fall under the influurince of some unconverted 'n' ungodly person, 'n' the paths of peace."

Here Barbary's sniff echoed loud and distinct from some unseen corner. Mrs. Long started. The four aunts turned and fixed their eyes upon the "help" with severity.

"What if he can't find her?" queried Aunt Loisy, snapping her needles.

"The elder's a terrible understandin' man, ez well's a good man," remarked Aunt Jane as if she had been contradicted, and with her stern gaze still fixed in the direction of Barbary, quite ignoring Aunt Loisy.

"Hev you looked everywhere raound here?" came from Aunt Polly, who evidently feared open war was near, and was anxious to avert it.

"Yes, everywhere, they're searchin' in the woods now, I s'pose," sighed the widow dismally.

"But, lor' she ha'n't there, I shouldn't wonder if she was merried to Tom Barrington afore this time," said Aunt Loisy with an aggressive pucker.

"Loisy Hutchinson, you never did hev no sense nor notbin' else," and Mrs. Long indignantly left the room.

The entrance of a neighbor prevented any comments being made on this sweeping accusation.

The neighbor was a wiry, inquisitive-looking man, whose nose looked as if it had been sharpened to a fine point by contact with other peoples' affairs.

"Wall," said he cheerfully, tilting his chair back against the wall, and producing a knife from his pocket, which he drew backward and forward across the legs of his substantial boot, "et seems naow as ef Delphine wasn't nowhere. John Randall hez got back, 'n' he sez the stage didn't take in no new passengers tell she got 'way down to Cold Stream. There ha'n't no strange team bin along the Turnpike, nor t'other way acrost the bridge."

And then the whole group, taking the advantage of Mrs. Long's temporary absence, commenced to discuss horrible possibilities of finding the object of their search in the river, or in the old well in the orchard, or lying cold and stark in some as yet unexplored nook in the woods, until Delphine worn with sleeplessness and anxiety and the pain in her cramped limbs, was filled with a vague horror, and shuddered there alone in the darkness. Each one remembered some dreadful tragedy connected with disappointed love or unhappy marriage, and related the ghastly details with great elaboration and evident enjoyment.

"I knowed somethin' was a goin' to happen in this famerly," sighed Jane, "fur there wuz a windin' sheet in the candle night afore las'."

"'N' Eunus sez the sittin'-room fire, every time it's been lit on cool mornin's this summer, has been baound to burn on one side entirely. There wuz no coaxin' ov it to creep through t' t'other. That's allers a sign ov bad luck, you knaow, I've knaowd it to mean death," said Aunt Mary Ann.

The elder and his friend did not return that night, and shortly after nine o'clock, though there was still a light in the kitchen, the house became comparatively quiet. The slow hours wore toward morning. Once or twice Delphine let herself down from her lofty perch, and eased her cramped limbs by walking swiftly and noiselessly about the floor. But she dared not remain long out of the kettle, for a candle burned till morning in the kitchen window, and Seth, who was absent, probably still in active search, was likely to return at any time. She dared not sleep for fear that morning should steal upon her unawares, and she be discovered with her unfortunate head out of the kettle.

Another lovely, summer-like day crept goldenly out of the autumn mist, and settled upon the rich harvest fields, and the purple hills in the distance. The outside door was open, and sweet puffs of wind bringing fragrant, woodland odors of pungent herbs and balsams, blew in Delphine's face. There was a musical tinkle of cow-bells in the air, the faint rustle of the raft-filled river, the swish of scythes in the ripened grain, and now and then the lazy roll of heavy farm wheels.

But all familiar sights and sounds seemed so strange to the poor girl from her strange hiding-place. The day passed away much as yesterday had done. The neighbors came in to gossip and condole, to tell what was said at the store, what was suspected at the corner, and to give their own opinions over and over again. She heard her mother's voice at intervals, now choked with weeping, now harsh with scolding. The aunts gathered round the saffron-bed in the back-yard, just under the chink in the wall, spent a full hour in solemn conclave as to what would be done with her clothes in case she was never heard from more.

Barbary's significant sniff was of frequent occurrence. The elder returned at noon exceedingly ruffled in appearance, his smart clothing spattered with mud, and covered with dust.

Late in the afternoon she heard her mother's quick, energetic step cross the floor, and pause in the open doorway. For some moments she stood there quietly. The crickets were singing dismally under the rude plank floor. A pale amethystine mist had settled round the distant hills. The sun, which was near its setting, looked like a great crimson wheel through the thin floating haze. Presently another step came clipping the tall weeds outside, and the elders voice, thin, high-pitched, solemn, broke the stillness.

"Air yaou alone, Mis' Long? Ef yaou air I'd like to speak with you. Sense to-day was fixed fur a weddin'-day, 'n' hez sot all the folks a talkin', don't you think we'd better hev a wedding tewnight after all, 'n' give 'em something more to talk about? Elder Knight is here all ready to perform the ceremony, 'n' ez there anything to hender yeou 'n' me bein' jined in the holy bond of matrimony; thet is, in case you air willin'? I should ha' perferred her to yaou fur my wife in the first place, of course, but seein' ez you'd hed husban's already, 'n' wuz so well able fur tew stand alone in womunly dignity, thought I'd give Delphiny a chance she"——

"Oh, mercy," interrupted the widow, "do you think I'd heve the heart tew git merried whilst I'm in the dark abaout my Delphiny? Wait tell I knaow what hez become ov her, whuther she'd dead or alive, happy or sorrowful. I respec' yaour offer, but a mother ez a mother alwiz, Elder Taylor."

"I make no doubt but thet yaour daughter hez run away to jine with thet profigate young man thet stole like a serpint inter the bosom of this happy farmerly last year. She chose her own path, 'n' she must walk in et. Why should you, the innocent, suffer fur the guilty? The unregenerate alwiz prefer the serciety ov the unregenerate, you see she"—

Delphine heard no more of their edifying conversation, but involuntarily uttered a little exclamation of delight, which however, escaped the ears of the absorbed couple, for a well-known figure was driving at break-neck speed up the lane, and her release was at hand. In two minutes more, Tom was standing before this startled pair, indignantly demanding of them what they had done with Delphine.

"Oh, Lordy, ha'n't Delphiny with you,

after all?" screamed Barbary, rushing in from the kitchen. "Oh, where kin the poor girl be? I've been consolin' myself all the while a thinkin' she wuz with you." And, for the first time in her life, almost, she burst into tears."

"Here I am, Barbary! here I am, Tom," spoke Delphine cheerfully from the depths of the brass kettle. "And now if you only help me down, I think all will be right."

"Oh, yoau wicked, wicked girl, to sceare yeour mother almost to death fur nothin'!" exclaimed Mrs. Long, but her reproaches did not continue, for Delphine had fainted, a little white heap in Tom's arms. Divining the whole story at once, he had sprung to her assistance while the others stood transfixed with amazement.

"So my brave little girl managed to wait for me after all," he said when the color crept into her cheek again, and she opened her eyes. "I was away from home when your letter reached Stanford, Delphine, but I have traveled every moment with a horrible fear that I might be too late, making my blood curdle all the way. You are certainly not married to the elder?" with an awful glance at his would-be rival.

"I told you that I would never marry any one but you, Tom."

Then Delphine went up-stairs to her own room for a little rest, and Tom had a private interview with Delphine's mother, which must have been a successful one, for she appeared from it with a softened and smiling manner, and immediately went up to her daughter with the wedding-dress on her arm, and bade her, at Tom's request, to array herself in it as speedily as possible.

And Tom sought the elder with extended hand, and wished him joy after a most cordial and friendly fashion.

At early lamp-lighting, as the hour was named announced among the relatives, there was a wedding in the Widow Long's parlor, a double wedding which filled every one with surprise, and in spite of the lugubrious manner of the officiating elder who pronounced the marriage ceremony, in the same warning tone with which he was wont to declare that the ark of safety was a sailin' by in prayer meetings, it was a merry one.

The older bride, who was all smiles and tears like a young girl, declared that she was never so flustrated in her life,—the findin' Delphiny, the elder's proposal, 'n' the weddin' and all was dretful suddin. The elder swallowed all resentment, and wore a noble smile upon his severe countenance, while the joy of the younger couple could not be suppressed. It sparkled in every look and tone, and excited the sympathy of all the guests. And in spite of past trials and hardships and the imprisonment of the brass kettle, there never was a prettier, rosier or fresher bride, though, as doubtful Barbary declared, "she had taken all the weddin'-look out of her dress, by a sticken every one of the red roses off her mother's monthly bush inter her belt, 'n' under her chin."

"Well, I shell fine eout the meanin' ov thet windin' sheet in the candle, 'n' thet fire's bein' so sot on burnin' one side, sooner or later," sighed Aunt Loisy as she climbed into the lofty wagon after the ceremony was over, "'n' whatever folks say et don't seem to me a purty or proper thing for a young woman to hang herself up in a brass kettle, even ef 'was tew keep herself from gettin' married to the wrong one"

"Wouldn't yaou a died afore you'd a married the elder, if you'd been in Eunus' place?" said Aunt Polly, meditatingly.

Upon a gayer, happier scene,
Never did holly berries peer,
Or ivy throw its trailing green,
On brighter forms than there are here.

Nor Christmas in his old arm-chair
Smile upon lips and brows more fair;
Then let us sing amid our cheer,
Old Christmas still comes once a year.

THOMAS MILLER.

A TERRIBLE CHRISTMAS-EVE.

By M. H. Preston.

TWO or three years ago, in the best possible spirits and with the happiest auspices, I took my seat in a first-class railway carriage at London Road Station, Manchester, with a ticket in my pocket which proclaimed my destination to be far south. It was the night before Christmas Eve, at about eleven o'clock, for I remember the train started 11.20. The huge station was filled with noise bustling life; groups of all classes of people hustled and jostled each on the platform; snorting engines puffed, roared, and screamed; trains were continually arriving and departing; porters were crying incessantly "By your leave!" and wheeling ponderous trucks laden with Christmas hampers, barrels of oysters, canvas-covered hams, crates of oranges, boxes of cheeses, baskets of game, trunks, parcels, packages of every shape and size. Here and there some aristocratic individual would walk calmly through the bustling crowd, and take his seat in a previously-engaged compartment, while his less fortunate fellow-creatures jostled and scrambled for their places. On the whole however it was a good-humored crowd, nearly every face in it bearing that expression of cheerfulness and good humor that seems peculiar to Christmastide.

As to myself, I felt brimming over with good fellowship towards all mankind—so much so that I had not the least objection to taking a seat in a carriage that was occupied by two spiteful-looking maiden ladies and a fat elderly gentleman, who stormed at everybody in general and the railway-porters in particular; and in the fulness of my heart I even hastened to open the door as the train was on the point of moving, to admit a harassed delicate-looking young woman with a very young baby in her arms and a child of two or three years dragging at her skirts—for which piece of benevolence I received some withering glances from the two spinsters and a wrathful growl from the stou told gentleman.

None of these little incidents disturbed the serenity of my mind. I acknowledged frowns and sour glances with a conciliatory smile, made room for the young mother and her charges, leaned back in the carriage, and indulged in a delightful reverie—for there was bliss in store for me at the termination of my journey. I was going to spend Christmas with the dearest creature in the whole world—the sweetest blue-eyed darling that ever gladdened the eyes of a man and a lover, who, moreover, lived in one of the cosiest, merriest, most hospitable country-houses in Kent, and had the most amiable and sensible of parents, the merriest, most good-natured of sisters, and the jolliest brothers in the universe. Not only did I anticipate spending a delightfully happy Christmas, but I was looking forward to a still greater joy; for on New Year's Day we were going to be married at the little village church of Briarly, and after that I was to take my bride home to a fine new house near Manchester, where everything was so bright, luxurious, and pretty, that I was sure my darling would be enraptured with it; and I knew it needed only the sunshine of her dear presence to make it the happiest home in the world.

I was in what most people would call "easy circumstances"—not a millionnaire, but a long way from being poor. I was the owner of a manufactory, and received a very satisfactory annual balance-sheet from the hands of my accountant; there seemed therefore to be no cloud on my mental horizon, no cares for the future to disturb the happiness of my reverie, as the train rushed on through the darkness.

I was too excited to sleep, though the stout old gentleman soon exchanged his irascible growls for heavy snores plainly audible above the din and rattle of the train. The spinsters on the opposite seat sat very erect and rigid for some time; but presently there was a vacant expression in the eyes of one; then her eyelids drooped, her head sank back, and she slept with wide-open mouth and a somewhat more subdued snore than her *vis-a-vis*. Far more decorous was the behavior of her companion; she still maintained her upright position, though her head nodded spasmodically, and she struggled gallantly to keep her eyes open.

The two babies, I was glad to observe, were both sleeping quietly—one in the mother's arms, and the other stretched along the seat with his head in her lap. I

ventured to spread my rug over his plump mottled legs, and in return received a look of gratitude from the pale, tired-looking mother which brought about rather an uncomfortable feeling of tightness at my throat, and caused me to gaze for some time at the darkened window, down which steamy tears were flowing, reflecting a blurred like of myself.

Thus we traveled on for many miles. Midnight passed, and I became wretchedly cold and hungry, irritable and quarrelsome; a savage desire filled me to pull the sharp frosty nose of my nodding companion, who would not resign herself comfortably to sleep, but still alternately glared and nodded, and was, moreover, afflicted with the most depressing influenza. Each moment my feeling of nervous irritation became intensified, and at last I conceived a morbid idea that I should never survive the miseries of the journey.

Only one incident occurred to break the monotony. I had noticed that the young mother grew rather restless and nervous as we approached the station where the tickets were generally collected; and, when we reached it, and the door was flung open by a surly official, she timidly handed him a third-class ticket, faintly murmuring that all the other carriages were filled before she could secure a seat.

"Oh, come," said the man gruffly—"none of that humbug! Just bundle out of this! You're not going to travel first-class with a third ticket, I can tell you!"

She had hastily roused the sleeping boy, who now roared lustily. But I could not sit there and see the poor tired creature drag her babies into a draughty third-class carriage on such a night. So I interposed, satisfied the ticket collector, and had the gratification of seeing the little family once more settled as comfortable as circumstances would admit.

It was nearly eight o'clock when the raw gray light of dawn struggled in at the carriage window and disclosed to each of us our haggard woe-begone faces; and a few minutes later the train drew slowly into another bustling station, where we all alighted and dispersed. What social amiable individuals we had proved to be! After the usual manner of English travelers, we five people—not including the babies—had been shut up together through a whole night, and, with the exception of the young mother's warm expression of gratitude for the small service I had rendered her, none of us had spoken an agreeable word; and we parted as mutely as we had traveled.

I was soon seated before a blazing fire in the coffee-room of the railway hotel, where I consoled myself for the night's miseries with steak and kidneys, cold fowl, *et-cætera*. After doing ample justice to this repast, I dozed in a comfortable arm-chair for an hour before I resumed my journey. The arrival of my train was announced at last; and, after another period of chill discomfort, I reached the pretty rustic station of Briarly.

Craning my neck out of the carriage window, I beheld a bright smiling face under a coquettish fur hat, and in another moment had clasped in my arms a dear little figure in a ruby-colored dress and warm sealskin jacket, receiving a mock rebuke for so frightful a proceeding in so public a place. I did not feel abashed. The station-master and the porters of Briarly Station were well acquainted with me and with the interesting object of my visit; and, as for the strangers who had left the train and were marching along the platform, what did I care for them?

"Now then, Mr. John Hope, if you can condescend to notice any one less interesting than Blanche, here are Hattie and I ready to wish you a Merry Christmas, and many of 'em!"

I turned to greet my future brother-in-law Ted, the eldest of Blanche's brothers, and his sister Hattie, and for a few minutes we kept up a delightful clatter with our talk and laughter.

"I must hurry off to 'The Maypole,'" I said at last. "and rid myself of this railway grim, before I can put in an appearance at Sunnymede. I see Jones has taken possession of my luggage."

Blanche's home being crowded with Christmas and wedding guests, and her mother having very rigid notions of propriety, it was deemed expedient for me to take up my quarters at the village inn; to which I could not have the slightest objection, as I knew from experience that "The Maypole" was one of the most comfortable and delightful of homely old-fashioned country inns, distant only half a mile from Sunnymede Grange.

"You will not be long before you join us, will you, Jack?" said Blanche, as we parted at the corner of the lane leading to "The

Maypole;" and they turned in another direction towards home. "We dine at eight to-night—a litter on your account—and we are to have a carpet-dance until the waits come."

"Yes; hurry up, Jack!" cried Ted. "We'll have a regular jolly Christmas-Eve. Ta-ta for the present!"

"I'll be with you in an hour, or less," I said, as I strode off.

When I reached the inn, I found that my luggage had already arrived and been placed in my bed-room, where a bright fire burned. Everything wore a cheerful air of expectation and welcome which was very grateful to a tired traveler. The cause of my visit to Briarly was as well known at the inn as at the railway-station, or anywhere else in the little primitive village, for that matter. This was not by any means my first appearance at Briarly, which had been a most attractive place during the fifteen months of my engagement, and even before that eventful period, so I was welcomed all around with smiling faces and good wishes. Landlord and landlady, chamber-maid and waiter, ostler, stable-boy, cook, sculley-maid—each and all contrived to have a peep at or exchange a greeting with Miss Blanche Warren's "intended"; and it was with a feeling of satisfaction and something like self-importance that I sat down in a comfortable old-fashioned easy-chair before the bed-room fire to regale myself with a cup of strong coffee before commencing my toilet.

As I sat there, it occured to me that this was a good opportunity for inspecting the presents I had brought, and to assure myself of the safety of the diamond bracelet intended for Blanche. Not that I had any doubt about the matter, because I had kept the case containing these treasures in my charge all through my journey; it was more for the gratification of looking at the beautiful ornament and imagining its effect on the snowy round arm for which it was intended.

Unlocking a small hand-bag, I drew forth the morocco case, and, opening it, gazed with delight at the glittering band.

"Blanche will be pleased," I said to myself; "it will sparkle on her dear arm on our wedding-day—bless her! I should like to load her with diamonds, or anything else the heart of woman most desires."

Then I drew forth other cases—a diamond brooch for mamma-in-law, a pin set with the same precious stones for papa-in-law, gold lockets with monograms for the girls, and studs for the boys. They were all right, and all, as I hoped, handsome and suitable. I had intended presenting them on the morrow Christmas-Day; but, as I gazed at them, I changed my mind, and decided to take them with me that night. I never could postpone a pleasure, and I wanted to see Blanche's face brighten and her eyes sparkle at her new treasure. No I could not wait until the morrow.

As I sat sipping my coffee I mused over our courtship, and thought of the last summer but one, when my college chum Ted Warren had invited me down to his father's place at Briarly to fish, and otherwise kill the idle hours of my holiday. Oh! that glorious summer-time—the fun the merriment we had in that hospitable house! How distracted I felt among the bevy of pretty sisters, until one seemed to shine out from among the rest, and I fell over head and ears in love with Blanche! The course of our love, true as it was, proved the exception to the rule, and ran as smoothly as the stream in which Ted and I fished. My prospects were good, and Blanche loved me, I believe, almost as much as I loved her; I had no rival except an imaginary one in the person of a bluff florid young squire, who caused me some pangs for a few days at the beginning of our acquaintance, but who was, I found, engaged to Blanche's eldest sister, Mary. Mr. and Mrs. Warren gave a complacent consent, and before the end of the summer my darling and I were engaged.

Musing thus in front of the fire, I grew somewhat drowsy; but at length, rousing myself with an effort, I put the presents into my pocket and started off towards Sunnymede Grange.

Part of the road skirted a plantation called Briarly Wood, almost large and dense enough to be called a forest. To walk to Sunnymede by the road was to make a considerable *detour*, but a path through the wood cut off a corner and shortened the distance of about a quarter of a mile.

As I had stayed rather too long at the inn and the appointed dinner-hour was fast approaching, I decided to go by the shorter way, and passed through the little moss-grown gate leading into the wood. Very dark and uninviting it looked as I gazed into its black depths and heard the dreary soughings of the wind among the gaunt leafless branches overhead. For a few moments I

hesitated, and then, with a laugh at my nervousness, plunged into the darkness, my feet slipping over the wet spongy grass. Before I had got halfway through the wood however I repented of my folly; my boots were wet, and I was splashed with mud almost up to my eyes. A fit state I should be in to present myself before the assembled guests! What a fool I was, I thought, not to have kept to the road, even had it been twice the distance! That was comparatively dry and hard, while this was like floundering through a morass—a perfect Slough of Despond! Suddenly, to my deep disgust, I found I had lost the path, and was wandering about aimlessly among undergrowth and bracken. Was I to ramble about there all night, while Blanche grew frantic at my non-appearance? I thought I knew the path by heart, for it was in this very wood I had proposed to my darling and received her shy whisper of consent. That was in the summer-time, with the sunshine streaming down between the leaves, with the birds singing, butterflies flitting to and fro, and flowers filling the air with their fragrance; now, in the darkness, gloomy-looking trees black and sombre like ghostly figures, suggesting thoughts of gnomes and goblins.

"What a fool you must have been!" I said for the hundredth time. I had to walk warily, for I felt sure I was close to Blackman's Pool. I thought I recollected a certain clump of trees beneath which we held a picnic during the preceding summer; and I remembered that we pulled ourselves about in a little punt on the pool, which Frank declared to be thirty or forty feet deep in some places. Very lovely it looked on that summer day, with the setting sun shining upon it, turning its waters to gold; but what a black, inky, horrible pool to fall into on Christmas-Eve!

I then remembered having seen a cottage close by among the trees, and was just wondering if I was near and whether its inmates could direct me, when I heard a rustling among the bracken, and saw a woman flying towards me, wringing her hands in distress.

"Oh, sir, what merciful providence has sent you here just now? My husband has had an accident, and is lying on the floor of our cottage. Oh, he will die! I can't move him, and there is not a soul with me to fetch the doctor. Do come and help me for the love of heaven!"

Without pausing to inquire into the nature of the accident, I hastily followed the woman, who walking along rapidly, soon led me to the door of a crazy tumble-down hut. A light shone through a very small window, and I noticed what a wretched, ill-conditioned hovel it appeared. I passed inside, and, to my astonishment, the woman carefully locked the door, and then disappeared. I looked round for the wounded man whom I had come to aid, but saw no signs of such a being. Then followed the most dreadful experience I ever passed through. Without a warning sound, I felt myself suddenly seized from behind and pinioned; my legs were then tied, and I was thrown violently to the floor. I saw that my captors were two powerful villanous-looking men, and at the first glimpse of their faces all hope seemed to die within me. I offered what resistance I could, but was helpless in their hands.

In an outburst of wild but impotent rage I demanded to know for what purpose I had been decoyed thither, and ordered them to set me at liberty instantly.

"Not if we knows it!" said one of the men, with an oath. "Yer don't get away that easy, my fine fellar, I bet! It's not so often we catch the likes o' you. We must see the color o' yer money; and my mate here's taken a fancy to this fine watch and chain. I'd like these studs, and this flash ring, so we'll relieve you of 'em. I'd advise yer to hold yer jaw too, or I'll have to show you how."

The other man was busy searching my pockets; and, as I felt his hand on the case of jewels, I could not refrain from uttering a loud cry for help, although I knew how worse than useless it was. Instantly I received a blow which loosened my teeth and made my mouth bleed.

"What—yer won't hold yer row? Then we'll make yer!" said my assiliant, trying a filthy red handkerchief over my mouth as a gag, and then proceeded with his search for booty.

They were soon gloating over the diamonds and the other jewels, spreading them on the rickety table and turning them over with their vile fingers. It was agony to me to see in such hands the pretty gems with which I had anticipated adorning my darling. Then I began to hope, since they had obtained a larger booty than they expected, they would set me free; but I soon found,

from snatches of their whispered conversation, that such was far from their intention; and my heart sickened as I heard such scraps "Stun him! Pitch him into th' pool! Dead men tell no tales! Finish the job proper!"

Cold perspiration poured down my face and the dingy room appeared to swim round me as I thought of my poor little love waiting so anxiously for me, while I lay in deadly peril. How she would watch and wait and hope, and then despair! I thought of the inquiries, the fruitless search, the grief for me and wonder as to my fate. And then at last they would find my dead body rotting in yonder black ghastly pool.

In the midst of my terror I vaguely noted everything in the room—the rough unplastered walls and the stains which the rain had made in trickling through the crevices, the low roof, the rude brick fireplace, the three-legged round table at which sat the two men on rough wooden stools or benches. I noticed also a gun in one corner, and a thick heavy club or stick; an iron crowbar lay on the floor, and an old-fashioned dark lantern hung against the wall.

Then I began to wonder what had become of the woman who had so basely decoyed and trapped me; and while I wondered she entered the room, and I saw she was pale-faced, dark-haired, and had a terrible bruise over one eye. She uttered a loud exclamation of delight at sight of the jewelry; and one of the men roughly told her to put away the spoil while they "finished the job" and got rid of me.

I saw the woman's face turn a shade paler; and, glancing uneasily at me, she muttered a few hasty sentence, among which I detected the words, "Not in the house then!"

The man swore angrily at her, and called her a fool, but seemed about to comply with her wishes, for drawing on a heavy great-coat and taking the thick club, he and the other man lifted me up between them and carried me out of the hut.

Oh, the agony of that moment! I prayed then as I had never prayed before.

We reached the pool, and they put me down among the sodden grass at its edge. I could feel the water lapping and washing over my feet, as though impatient to draw me in, while the two men held a consultation, one wanting to throw me in as I was, and the other brute contending that "it would be safer to finish him off with a crack" before committing me to the lake. I listened with a horrible anxiety; but at length they decided that it would be impossible for me to escape, pinioned as I was; and, if, on the other hand, they beat out my brains, there might be ugly marks left on the ground to betray them.

Having come to this decision, they lifted me from the ground and swung me to and fro to insure my falling in a good distance away from the bank; and then I closed my eyes while I was flung out, and immediately afterwards felt myself sinking, sinking, sinking—— There was a crash! I opened my eyes again, and found myself not at the bottom of Blackman's Pool, but stretched at full length across the hearthrug of my bedroom at "The Maypole," with my head among the fire-irons.

"Thank heaven!" I exclaimed fervently, as I rose to my feet and looked round with a bewildered stare. "Thank heaven, it was only a dream!"

Yes; it was only a dream! I was in the dear old familiar room; there were the cases of jewels lying open on the dressing-table, my empty coffee-cup had fallen from my hand and rolled under the grate, and I was in dressing-gown and slippers. There, beside the jewels, lay the coveted watch; and —oh, the pity of it!—its hands pointed to thirty minutes past ten, and the dinner-hour at Sunnymede was eight o'clock. Blanche would be frantic!

Hastily I washed, shaved, dressed, and adorned myself, gathered up my treasures, rushed down-stairs, and in the fullness of my heart gave the landlord a fervent grip of the hand, wished him a Merry Christmas, and ordered an unlimited supply of punch for the whole of the rustic company at the bar to drink my health. I then ran off, leaving the good folk of "The Maypole" very much in doubt as to my sanity.

I avoided the path through Briarly Wood, and kept to the road, walking as fast as I possibly could. I soon reached the Grange, through the windows of which shone a brilliant light, casting a cheery glow out into the dark night. My entrance caused a sensation even among the servants in the hall, and in a few minutes I was surrounded by a cluster of white-robed ladies and gentlemen in evening-dress, and my pretty Blanche was sobbing hysterically in my arms, while I frantically endeavored to answer a score of questions at once.

"It's all right," I said; "I couldn't help

it! I've had an adventure; and if you'll take your seats quietly by the fire, I'll tell you all about it."

We all grouped ourselves around the huge fire in the library, the light of which shone upon the expectant faces of young and old Warrens, of cousins, aunts and uncles, and sweethearts, while the pictured faces of the dead-and-gone Warrens glowed in the firelight as if they too participated in the general joy and gladness.

Blanche nestled on a low chair close by my side, with her hand clasped in mine, as if to feel quite sure of my actual presence; and, as I glanced at her sweet loving face and thought what her tender heart would have suffered had my dream been a reality, I could not repress a shudder.

All were eager to hear my story, and I could not resist the temptation of harrowing their feelings; so I began to tell the tale as if my adventure in dreamland had really happened in Briarly Wood. As I proceeded however to dilate on the horrors of my situation in the cottage, I percieved, to my dismay, that I was scarcely making the impression I desired. The ladies looked properly horrified and very much impressed; but I detected an expression of incredulous amusement on the face of Ted and his brothers. My respected father-in-law-elect appeared sternly indignant, and evidently suspected me of having imbibed a stronger liquid than coffee. Worse than all, my darling seemed about to swoon; so, relinquishing my desire for sensation, I came hastily to the end of my story, and, finding it necessary to place my arm around Blanche's waist, assured her that it was after all nothing but a dream.

"Poor boy!" said Mrs. Warren, the only considerate creature in the whole assembly, with the exception of my dear one. "No wonder you were fatigued after such a dreary journey, and— Dear me, how thoughtless we are! You have had no dinner, and yet we have kept you to explain all this! My dear Jack, I'm sure you must feel faint!"

Away bustled the dear motherly old lady in her black satin and rich lace, not content to ring the bell and consign me to the mercy of a servant, but she herself superintending the preparation of a substantial dinner, daintly set out in the pretty little breakfast-room, where, with Blanche for my sole companion, I prolonged the entertainment until we were ruthlessly summoned to listen to the waits. Then we all gathered together at the drawing-room windows and listened to the group of village choirsters singing of "peace and good will towards men," with such taste and sweetness that I felt proud to think that Blanche had been their choir-mistress. Before the singers had finished I found her shedding tears.

"Not unhappy ones," she assured me.

No words could adequately describe that Christmas Day, or the merry happy week which followed. The weather changed suddenly from cold and dampness to a hard sharp frost, we made the Sunnymede meadows ring with our shouts and laughter as we skated on all the surrounding ponds. We acted charades, tableaux, and plays, sang and danced till the days flew by so rapidly that they seemed like a sunny dream.

On the wedding-morning the wintry sun lighted up the old village church, where the Christmas decorations had been suffered to remain in my darling's honor. It streamed in through the stained windows on the shining holly and laurel, falling on the white dresses of Blanche and her bridesmaids. My little bride looked like a winter fairy, enveloped in a cloud of some mysterious delicate white material, with soft ruffles of lace about her throat and wrists. The diamond bracelet figured conspicuously.

I took an early opportunity of asking Ted who were the inmates of the cottage in Briarly Wood, for I had a superstitious impression that the place was haunted by ruffians.

"Do I know them?" said Ted, laughing. "To be sure I do! They are an honest hard-working young gamekeeper and his wife, whom I will introduce to you some day. You see we knew your terrible story must be a farce, though you related it with such tragical expression."

The next summer, when on a visit to Sunnymede Grange with my dear little wife, on the occasion of her Sister Mary's marriage to the bluff young squire, we had a picnic in ever-to-be-remembered Briarly Wood, and I made the acquaintance of the young gamekeeper's wife and her fat healthy baby, and found the clean, picturesque, comfortable cottage to be unlike the wretched hovel which I still remembered with a shudder, as the pretty rosy-cheeked smiling young wife was unlike the repulsive-looking woman of my terrible dream.

THE CHURCH FAIR.

By. T. Addison.

THEY wanted a new organ in the church over which the Rev. Jonah Gabbleon presided, and to raise the money for the much desired instrument it was decided to hold a fair in Knabbs' Hall over the post-office. After several weeks of preparation for the monentous event, and all Bartonville turned out to enjoy the unwonted festivity, and indulge their propensity to higgle over bargains and criticise their neighbors.

In the evening their fair reached a glorious height of activity, and to rustic eyes the scene was absolutely gorgeous.

Knabbs' Hall had never before shone so resplendently. Every lamp the neighborhood could spare was devoted to illuminating the building, and they were placed in such a way as to throw the most attractive light on the booths and fair occupants.

Early in the evening, Mr. Hezekiah Cornish came laboring up the stairs with a monstrous turkey, nicely plucked and ready for the oven.

"Here's a tu'key I thought I'd bring over ter the fair," he said to Mrs. Babbs, who had been placed in charge of the refectory near the head of the stairs, in order that no one might escape without first wresting with her cold chicken and doughnuts.

"Mercy on me," wheezed Mrs. Babbs rather crossly. "What on airth kin we do with thet great raw thing, Mr. Cornish? You don't s'pose we've got a cook stove up here, do you?"

"I didn't s'pose you was goin' ter cook it here," replied Mr. Cornish, somewhat disconcerted. "I brung it up to be raffled fer. Ten cents a chance, you know. You kin git lots o' money outen a tu'key carcass thet way."

Mrs. Babb looked at Mr. Cornish severely.

"I guess you fergit this is a church fair, Mr. Cornish. We don't do no gamblin' here."

"Gamblin'!" exclamed Mr. Cornish, getting very red in the face. "Who said anything 'bout gamblin'? Raffling fer a tu'key ain't no more gamblin' than your old grab-bags be. If anything 's ter be said, it's in favor of the tu'key, I should say. You know what you're getting when you're rafflin' fer a tu'key, but I'm blamed if as much kin be said 'bout divin' inter an old clo'es bag!"

"We don't use no old clo'es bag, I'd hev you ter know, Hezekiah Cornish," said Mrs. Babbs, her face gaining color. "An' if we did 't wouldn't be none o' your bizness. If yeu want to give your tu'key to the fair, you kin, but there won't be no rafflin' fur it, I might as well tell you thet, first as last."

"Oh, there won't be, won't there! Then I'll be durned if this fair gits this tu'key. Who's runnin' this one hoss thing, any way? Here, I say, Miss Grump!" cried Mr. Cornish, catching sight of that lady in the crowd, and making toward her, unmindful of the now irate Mrs. Babbs, who called after him that she guessed she had as much to say about the fair as any one.

"Miss Grump!" cried Mr. Cornish again, swinging his turkey recklessly along through the throng of people, therby nearly upsetting young Mr. Lemuel Blabton, who was conveyed Miss Hebe Scrubbs to her mamma.

"Well?" said Miss Grump, in a business-like tone, turning around and facing Mr. Cornish, who had just overtaken her.

"I've brung this tu'key ter the fair ter be raffled fer. Will you hev it?"

Mr. Cornish never could seem to disabuse his mind of the impression it had received years before that Miss Grump was *facile princeps* in every church movement, and others stood or fell at her command.

"No, sir. We don't take no money thet is got by gamblin'," she replied sharply. "I should think you know enuff for that, Hezekiah Cornish. The Lord don't sanction wicked ways o' gettin' money."

"Oh, all right," answered Mr. Cornish angrily. "I thought I'd try an' help your blamed old fair a leetle; but of course you know what's right an' what 's wrong. Chargin' four times as much as things is wuth don't seem very partickler righteous ter me, either."

And Mr. Cornish glanced around at the booths with a contemptuous sniff.

"You know that ain't so, Hezekiah Cornish!" cried Miss Grump, boiling over with wrath. "You oughter be ashamed o' yourself to come in here an' lie like thet. You

kin jest go along with your old tu'key. The church don't want no sech money as you propose givin', and the sooner you know it the better."

"Oh, all right," repeated Mr. Cornish, sneeringly, changing hands with the turkey. "I'll take this bird inter Cap'n Nolar's store an' raffle it there. I jest bet the church does take the money I git fer it, too."

"An' I'll jest bet it don't," screamed Miss Grump after Mr. Cornish, as he went off toward the stairs.

"I'll bet it does," yelled back that gentleman, looking over the railing with a taunting grin. "I'll drop the chink inter the collecshun plate, next Sunday, sure 's I'm born. You see if I don't.".

And Mr. Cornish plunged down the stairs breathing forth maledictions on "durned old church fairs," in general, and "blasted old grab-bags" in particular.

"I guess Hezekiah Cornish has got his dander up 'bout something or uther," whispered Jabez Finleather to his wife, a faded-looking woman with signs of erysipelas on the end of her nose.

"Oh, he's been having words with Camilla Grump," replied Mrs. Finleather, tossing her head knowingly. "An angel couldn't talk five minutes with thet woman 'thout gittin' madder'n a blue-bottle fly. She's awful wearin' on a body's temper. But sakes alive, Jabez, if there ain't Elder Gimp standin' over there talkin' with Mrs. Gabbs! Let's go over and speak ter him. I guess it's the fust time he's been out since he got over thet fever he caught down ter Swampville. Now I should think he'd know better than to come out weather like this,—rainin' cats and dogs."

Elder Nathan Gimp was a lean, long-haired man, with crooked legs, and arms that hung like paddles at his sides. He was a widower, which, perhaps accounted for the girlish interest the Widow Gabbs took in him, and the air of artless innocence she always assumed at his approach.

With some difficulty, Mr. and Mrs. Finleather managed to thread their way through the crowd to Mrs. Gabbs's booth.

"Howdedoo, elder; howdedoo, Mrs. Gabbs," said Mr. Finleather, rubbing his hands briskly together, as was his wont when particularly pleased with himself and the world in general.

Mrs. Finleather echoed her husband's words *vice versa*.

The elder wrinkled up his face into a slow smile, and set his paddles in motion (which he always did when talking).

"I'm feelin' putty tol'able," he said, taking first Mr. Finleather's hand, then his wife's, and letting them drop again as if they were cold pancakes.

"I tell him he oughter be ashamed ter come out a night like this, jest arter gittin' over a sick spell," put in Mrs. Gabbs, leaning over the counter and looking interestedly at the elder. "I don't know what ails the men now-a-days. They don't seem ter use no more sense in takin' keer o' themselves than nothin'. Poor Deacon Gabbs met his death jest from a leetle cold he took an' wouldn't doctor up none. The way I nussed thet poor man! Well, I must say he was grateful. Almost the last words he said ter me was, 'Miry, you've been a good wife, and I only hope thet when I'm gone somebody 'll git you who'll appreciate you.' Not thet I claim ter bein' better than other wimmen, but I can say I kin cosset and cuddle with the next one, as Deacon Gabbs could tell, if he were only here, poor man."

And in her emotion at the deacon's untimely end Mrs. Gabbs caught up, in lieu of her pocket handkerchief, a sofa tidy and pressed it to her tearful eyes. Then, discovering her mistake, she peeped through the corner of the tidy to see if the elder had noticed it also (which, heaven be praised! he had not), and looked crossly at Mr. Finleather, on whose face a smile was just beginning to dawn.

"I guess yer need somebody ter take keer of yer, elder," said Mrs. Finleather, shaking her finger playfully at him.

Mrs. Gabbs smiled sweetly on Mrs. Finleather.

"Oh, it ain't sech a turrible night out o' doors," said the elder, swinging his paddles nervously. "It's only a kind of sizzle sozzlin' rain thet can't do nobody any harm."

"Yaas, but it's a kinder wet rain, all the same," said Mr. Finleather, punching the elder in the side, and laughing immmoderately at his little joke.

Just then, Mrs. Gabbs was called to the other side of the booth to wait on an old lady who was inspecting a log-cabin quilt.

"Let's go over to the lemonade stand an' git a drink," said the elder in a half whisper, looking anxiously after Mrs. Gabbs as if he feared she would return before he could make his escape.

Mr. and Mrs. Finleather seemed somewhat bewildered by this unwonted display of generosity on the part of Elder Gimp (the elder was accounted a pretty close hand with money), out nevertheless they were not slow in accepting his invitation.

"Elder—Elder Gimp! Wait a minnit I've suthin' ter ask yer!" cried Mrs Gabbs after the party as they moved away.

A cold sweat broke out on the elder's forehead.

"Come along, come along," he said nervously, to Mr. Finleather. "I'm dry as a bone. I snum, seems as if this crowd was harder 'n a brush fence ter git through. I am a'most choked fer to drink."

"I guess the fever hain't all left yer yit," said Mrs. Finleather innocently.

"Yaas, thet's it, thet's it," replied the elder, seizing any pretext to favor his flight.

"I wish them Finleathers had stayed ter hum instid o' comin' her an' luggin' off other people's company," said Mrs. Gabbs to herself.

Just at this moment she caught sight of the Rev. Mr. Gabbleon, who, having been delivered by some kind providence from the Widow Babbs was now struggling unsuspectingly past the Widow Gabbs.

"Well, I guess it's jest as well them Finleathers did come, arter all," added Mrs. Gabbs to herself, with sudden change of thought.

And she called to Mr. Gabbleon and captured him.

Across the hall from Mrs. Gabbs' booth was the candy counter, where Miss Abby Grippley, in a little French cap with cherry-colored ribbons, was dispensing a varied assortment of indigestable looking bonbons to a crowd of long-haired youths and freckled-faced maidens.

Elder Zachariah Grippley stood near the counter viewing the scene with an air of melancholy interest, and helping himself every few minutes in an abstracted sort of way to the acid drops which were within convenient reached. A short distance from him were Miss Siphinia Markins and Mrs. Phyllis Padmore, engaged in earnest conversation.

"They do tell, Siphiny," Mrs. Padmore was saying, "thet Harry Haynes sent down ter New York an' got all them moss roses, an' tubers, an' pansies, an' sich, jest coz he wanted Mary Jarvis ter hev the finest stand in the hull fair; an' I must say she's got it. Harry, he drawed out the plan fer thet pergoga, I b'lieve they call it; some sorter Chinese arrangement. 'Tis kinder takin' like, I allow, though it do seem sorter senseless to take sich a heap o' trouble for only one day."

"Oh, well he's got money now, an' I suppose he wants to air it some. Old Mrs. Baggs sez she's been watchin' them two—Mary and Harry—almost all the evenin', an' she sez it 'pears to her 's if Harry was a-goin' ter spend all his gran'f'ther's money on thet flower stand, the way he keeps buyin' an' givin' away, an' buyin' an' givin' away agin. Not thet it ain't good for the fair, but it does seem kinder squanderly."

"I should say so," agreed Mrs. Padmore, with marked emphasis. "I declare them Hayneses is gittin' ter be mighty cityfied in the airs they rut on since thet money fell ter them. Well, I'm sure I don't envy 'em none."

"Money ain't everything," said Miss Markins oracularly, rubbing her little snub nose energetically with the palm of her hand.

"Thet's so," assented Mrs. Padmore cordially. "People thet allus carries their heads up in the clouds are bound ter git a fall some time. Thank goodness there ain't nothin' stuck up 'bout me!"

"Dear me suz!" impatiently exclaimed Miss Markins, who for some time had been uneasily watching Elder Grippley putting acid drops into his wrinkled mouth. "I jest wonder how long thet man 'll keep on eatin' them candies 'thout payin' fer 'em. I believe he could eat a hull passover if it didn't cost him nothin'."

"What man?" inquired Mrs. Padmore.

"Why, Elder Grippley there. He's ben doin' nothin' but munch them candies ever since we've ben standin' here. Mebbe he thinks this fair's got up speshully fer him."

"Oh, he's an old skinflint any way," said Mrs. Padmore. "Jake Lambkins, the elder's hired man, sez he counts every grain 'o sugar he puts in his tea. He beats old Abe Adsloe fer meanness, he does, and the Lord knows Abe Adsloe's a finetooth comb arter money if anybody is."

"There ain't no profit in a fair if—— But good gracious, what's the matter with the elder?"

The elder had just put his hand to his nose with a loud exclamation that at once drew a large crowd around him, Mrs. Padmore and Miss Markins among it.

"Wh—what's the matter?" inquired Mr. Jedidiah Slumkins, sidling up to him with the utmost anxiety depicted on his countenance.

"Somebody hit me on the nose with suthin'," replied the elder, glaring wrathfully about him, and rubbing the injured member tenderly.

Sure enough on the very tip of the unfortunate gentleman's nose was a large red spot, gleaming in vivid contrast with his sallow, wrinkled face.

"Who was it? W-w-where is the vilyun?" exclaimed Mr. Slumkins, jerking at his coat collar and dancing around as if he would annihilate the audacious rascal on the spot could he but lay hands on him.

"I dunno," answered the elder sullenly. "D' ye think if I'd seen him I'd stand here an'——Ouch! Dog gone it! He's hit me agin—in the ear—the mis'able scoundrel!"

Elder Grippley hastily transferred his attention to his ear, leaving his nose to take care of itself.

Mr. Slumkins hopped around his venerated friend in a perfect ecstasy of righteous indignation, loudly declaring his feverish longing to bathe his hands in the gore of the sacreligious wretch who presumed to make a target of one of the staunchest pillars of the church.

The crowd also tendered its sympathy to the afflicted elder, who received it with a dignity becoming a martyr, though he could not help bobbing his head uneasily about at every sound as if he momentarily expected to be again smitten by the unseen hand.

"Ah, here's what done the mischief!" exclaimed Mr. Gabriel Carboy, picking up a speckled bean. "It's one o' them dratted bean-shootin' boys, thet's who it is."

"Wh—where is he?" wildly vociferated Mr. Slumkins, looking up and down the room and all about him.

"Ah, I see him!" cried Elder Gripley, rolling up his eyes to the skylight just overhead. "It's Dan Smalls, the little vilyun!"

"Aha!" yelled Mr. Slumkins tragically, as he rushed out of the hall in search of the offender.

"Serves the elder right fer eatin' all thet candy 'thout payin' fer it," whispered Miss Markins to Mrs. Padmore.

"It's a righteous dispensation, I should say," giggled Mrs. Padmore, who, now the scare was over, felt an irresistible, propensity to laugh at the absurd figure the elder cut, trying to rub his ear and nose at the same time.

Unfortunately for Mrs. Padmore, the elder observed her merriment, and, imagining its cause, bestowed a wrathful glance on the delinquent, and with a few severe words to his daughter (who, to have saved her life, could not help giggling also) stalked solemnly off after Mr. Slumkins.

Mr. Slumkins, it is sorrowful to relate, was ungratified in his desire to chastise Master Daniel Smalls.

That enterprising young gentleman, when he found he was discovered, dropped silently from the roof of the hall to that of an adjoining horse-shed, and thence to the ground in time to escape the avenger, into whose face he cast, with a sneering laugh, a handful of speckled beans as he came panting and puffing around the corner of the building.

The fair was brought to a close by an auction of the articles undisposed of. A stone dinner set, sent by Mrs. Joel Blabton, was bought jointly by Mrs. Gabbs and Mrs. Babbs (who for the time being united their forces) and was jointly presented to the Rev. Mr. Gabbleon by those interesting relicts; which as Mrs. Tilda Pinker loudly remarked:—

"Seein' as it only takes one plate fer the parson ter feed off of, is a mighty fine present."

"Yes," said Mrs. Hebe Scrubbs, seeing a yellow dressing gown knocked down to Mrs. Hansy Jarkinson, which she immediately presented to Mr. Gabbleon, "yes an it's all widders who are makin' him presents too. They don't give things away fer nothin', yer kin make up yer mind ter thet. They've all got their eyes on the parson, an' he'll be smarter'n I take him fer if he gits away from 'em. They're fittin' him out for future use."

"Well, they can't all git him, that's one comfort," replied Mrs. Pinker, nibbling at a peppermint lozenge. "But I 'low they are pressin' each other purty close, All I kin say is he's a fool if he takes any of 'em. He wants a right smart young gal, that's what he wants—not one of them tough old critters."

And Mrs. Parker nibbed painfully away at her lozenge with her best tooth, and stared stonily at Mrs. Babbs, who was talking volubly at Mr. Gabbleon, and laughing in her most girlish manner.

When the last person not connected with the fair had taken his departure, the ladies, amid a perfect tempest of conjectures as to who had taken in the most money, sat down to add up their receipts.

It was found that the fair had netted exactly two hundred dollars for the organ fund, leaving a deficit of gruesome proportions to be made up. This, all the ladies present pledged themselves to make good, by hook or crook, within the ensuing six months; and they were about to take their homeward ways when an awful discovery was made.

To Miss Grump's unqualified disgust and the amazement of all generally, it was learned that Mrs. Blabton expected to be reimbursed for the cost of the dinner set, which every one thought she had contributed; and Mrs. Judas Overdo confidently looked for a cash equivalent for her labors on certain tidies and cushion covers.

As the dinner set had only brought twenty-five dollars, while Mrs. Blabton's emissary declared it had cost just thirty dollars, and as none of Mrs. Overdo's articles had been disposed of, the ladies were in a quandary.

Finally it was decided to send back Mrs. Overdo's things marked "not sold," and to hand the Rev. Mr. Gabbleon the twenty-five dollars the dinner set had commanded, and return the latter to Mrs. Blabton with a polite note informing her that laborers in the Lord's vineyard should not expect their wages here below.

This done, the ladies departed, with the pleasing consciousness that a perplexing problem had been solved, and there were lots and lots to talk about for weeks to come.

A CHRISTMAS GROUP.

THE shining holly hangs upon the wall,
Its scarlet clusters gleaming in the light
Of ruddy fire-glow, and the welcome sound
Of silver laughter ripples through the room,
From youthful voices, whilst the mistletoe
Its white, transparent beadlets temptingly
Hangs o'er their sunny heads.

Now kith and kin
Are grouped in circle round the cherry hearth,
Each telling his experience of the year,
For some there be that only meet at Yule.

The gray-haired grandsire sagely nods his head
What time the prattle of the four-year-old—
The golden-tressed youngling of the flock—
Is poured into his ear; and on his knee,
Eager to prate, doth she, wee fairy, sit,
The household darling of a score of hearts'.
In yonder snug armchair sits grandmamma,
Whilst ten-year Tommy steals beside her knee.
Knowing full well, the bright-eyed, saucy rogue,
The hidden soft spot in the old dame's heart;
And with a loving, half-regretful gaze,
Look on the children's parents, carried back
To the "lang sype" when they themselves were blest.
In childhood's happy, glad unconsciousness
Of ills to come; and so, forgetting Time,
They in there treasured blossoms bloom again.

AUSTRALIAN SNAKE YARNS.

ALTHOUGH not so frequently met with, nor so deadly in their effect as the snakes of India, still, the snakes of Australia are a power sufficient to make their presence known and felt in every portion of it. They are occasionally found even in the most populous towns. In removing an old house in the centre of Sydney, a few years ago, a good specimen of the death-adder was discovered. It is not by any means an uncommon experience in the outskirts of a town to discover a snake in the wood-pile or under the veranda. Farther out in the country, they frequently appear in houses; and many instances are related of these creatures having been discovered in the bed of the settler. Such bedfellows, though coming only to enjoy the superfluous heat, are far from being pleasant companions, more especially if the human animal awakes before his reptile friend has gone. During my protracted residence in the Bush, I have occasionally known of a bite having been received through some sudden movement of a restless sleeper. For, so long as the snake may be permitted to enjoy the heat of the body unmolested, so long will it remain passive, and share the bed quietly with its companion. Treated, however, to a sudden movement which threatens its wordly peace, the snake will retaliate by biting, and then endeavor to escape in the disturbance it has made. As a rule, snakes will use their utmost endeavors to escape from man. The fang of the snake is deadly, but the weapons of mankind is more so. It is only when hard pressed by necessity or fear of danger that a snake will strike at all. The desire to destroy a snake is far more deeply implanted in man than the desire to destroy man is implanted in the snake. When once seen, a snake is bound to be killed, if possible. This may be considered to be the first principle of a Bushman's creed, and thus, with the increase of population, these reptiles are being effectually exterminated.

Some of those snakes, too, of which we hear the "yarns" are perfectly innocuous. It by no means follows, then, that every snake we have heard about was a poisonous reptile; nor is it every bite that comes from a poisonous snake. A snake is, however, a snake; and a snake-bite is a snake-bite; so that every precaution is taken to kill the animal and to cure the patient, and that, too, whether the reptile is venomous or not. This caution is praiseworthy; but the doctors make capital out of the transaction, for almost every snake-bite with its result finds its way into the papers. By that time the reptile has developed into one of the most poisonous of snakes, and although "killed by a well directed blow," it has acquired since its death at least three feet additional in length.

The snakes most common to Australia, naturalists tell us, are the brown snake, the black snake, the death-adder, the tiger-snake, the diamond-snake and the carpet-snake. I don't say this list exhausts the series, but these I have seen and handled—after their death. Of these, the diamond and the carpet snakes are perhaps the most common, the most beautiful, and the largest. Fortunately, they are not venomous, although they will hiss and rear and bite, exactly as the others. The death-adder is the shortest and smallest, but its bite is considered to be fatal. The tiger-snake is the fiercest, and very venomous. The brown and black snakes also inflict injuries, but these, under favorable conditions and with attention, may be cured. The wound given by a venomous snake is simply two small punctures, produced by the fangs. The wound produced by the bite of his non-venomous kinsman shows four or more punctures, made by the true teeth. The fangs of a venomous snake are two long teeth, having a canal passing down the centre of the tooth. At the base of this fang there is a little sac or cavity containing the poison. The fangs are ordinarily kept lying flat in the mouth, and are no more used for purposes of mastication than is the sting of a bee. In fact, snakes don't masticate. When the snake wishes to strike, the fangs are erected. Additional poison is secreted, and, as the fang is pressed against the limb or body "struck," the poison is pressed from the sac down the fang and into the wounds. The fangs are sometimes drawn by inducing the snake to strike a towel or other soft cloth, and then by a

sudden jerk the fangs are absolutely torn out. They are not teeth. During the swallowing process the fangs are lying quietly in the mouth, and are not used at all. The peculiar construction of the skull of the snake enables it to take in the body of an animal very much larger than itself, and snakes always swallow their prey entire, leaving it to nature to digest the mass.

In the month of February, snakes are said to be in their most ferocious mood. It is stated that they will during that month commence the assault on a person without waiting to be attacked.

Snakes can run rapidly, but are easily killed when attacked properly. A single blow of a sapling, or even a whip-lash, will break a snake's back. After it has undergone this operation, it is positively powerless, being only able to wriggle. As a rule, when one is killing a snake, he does not take time to see the effect of his back-breaking blow. He has the creature in a pulp before he finishes. Many houses in the country have snake-stickes—long slender saplings—standing at known places round the house, so as to be handy when a snake shows up. In killing a snake, great care must be used not to come up too close behind the reptile. On such an occasion it has the habit of throwing a back somersault like a circus clown and bringing its fangs into contact with your face. Many persons become so fearless that they will seize the most venomous snake by the neck, and kill it coolly with a stone or knife or against a tree. Others, catching the reptile by the tail, will swing it, and keep swinging it around the head, making the creature's head describe a circle, and so move about with it until a convenient opportunity offers for dashing its brains against a tree or rock. Such experiments may exhibit the performer's intrepidity of character, but at the same time they indicate a reckless foolhardiness that makes one shudder even to be a spectator.

But I have said so much about snakes, that my readers will think I have forgotten the promised yarns. The first which I shall mention I heard directly from a clergyman. He said it occured to himself. It comes, therefore, stamped with truth. I tell it as nearly as possible in the language of my friend.

"My father had two farms; on one of these we resided; the other one we kept simply as a grazing farm. The distance from the one farm to the other was about twenty-five miles. One day my father sent my brother and myself to the distant farm to bring home some of the cattle. So we rose and started early, and by the afternoon we arrived at our destination. There was an old house on that farm which had been used by the late settler. We kept the door locked, and only used the house when our business led us to the other farm either for branding cattle, mustering them, or making repairs on fences. The roof was fairly water-tight, and we kept a sort of a rough bed in the kitchen, and an old blanket or two in a chest. Taking with us what provisions we required, we often camped here for a week at a time. On this occasion, however, we arrived in the afternoon, lighted our fire, and made ourselves comfortable generally. Then we went out and rounded up the cattle, so as to have them handy for the morning; and about eight o'clock we turned in, my brother and I sleeping in the same bed. You learn to turn in early in the Bush.

"Some time during the night I was awakened by something heavy pressing on my chest. Fortunately, I became conscious at once; and you may guess my horror when I percieved it was a snake, which had coiled itself like a watch-spring across my breast. It had crept in below the blankets, and was simply enjoying the heat, without exhibiting the slightest concern as to the person from whom that enjoyment was obtained. To say that I became immediately conscious is to say that my blood ran cold. I had the satisfaction of knowing that as long as I remained still I had nothing to fear; but the moment I moved I was a dead man. And yet to lie still was torture. There was that horrible cold crawling snake lying a practical nightmare on my body. What was I to do? What I did was to reach over my hand and pinch my brother sharply.

"What are you doing?" he drawled.

"Archie, get up quietly and get a light. There's a snake lying coiled on my breast. Get up very quietly, man, or the thing will bite."

"Archie was all awake. He jumped out of bed, and was at the fire in "no time," with the lighted candle in his hand. Meantime the snake lay still, quietly enjoying the hot cushion on which it rested.

"What shall I do now? Are you sure it is a snake?"

"Certain. Get a stick, and be ready."

"Archie got one of the snake-sticks from the corner, and placing the candle on the table, awaited my further instructions.

"Now hit the clothes quietly. The brute will likely slip off.

"My brother threw off the blankets while I lay motionless, glaring at the deadly reptile coiled upon me. I declare its head was within eighteen inches of my own. Its eyes seemed burning fire.

"The snake looked up at the rough treatment which it was receiving, and fastened its eyes on Archie. Then it raised its head, darted out its little forked tongue and hissed at him. It was just like a cat. Oh, it was terrible agony! My brother started back, while I lay like a log, bathed in a fearful perspiration. Suddenly it moved, and the next moment I experienced a great relief by feeling the horrible creature crawling off my body."

"And the snake?" I asked, hanging on the words of a man who had survived such fearful experiences. "You killed him, of course; and what length was he?"

"Killed him—not at all. The creature got clean off. He ran like a cat, and escaped into a hole below the floor. We never saw him again; and I assure you I never wish to have any nearer acquaintance."

Mr. Richard Palmer lived in a beautifully situated cottage on the Macleay River. He had come out to the colony of New South Wales when a very young lad. He was the eldest son of his parents, and had been visited with a great misfortune; he had been born blind. However, his father had succeeded in business, and he was enabled to leave Richard comparatively well off. The other members of the family were also very good to Richard, so that he was, as the world says, independent when he married and settled down on the Macleay.

One day Richard was walking in his little garden. In his right hand he carried a glass, in which one of his children had brought him some new milk to the arbor. His child Johnny—eight years old—held him by the other hand, and guided the father's steps. Suddenly the child cried out, "A snake! a snake!" and dropping the father's hand, ran off towards its mother, who happened to be a spectator of the whole adventure. Mr. Palmer stood paralyzed. He was perfectly incapacitated through his blindness to fight a snake, and the reptile was even now winding itself about his leg. The child had given him no indication of its whereabouts, and he was fearful of moving anywhere, lest he should tread upon it. The blind man therefore stood still, while Mrs. Palmer set up a shrieking and a clamor that called all the family around her. Suddenly he heard the angry hiss, and immediately a blow was struck with much force, which fortunately struck the glass which he carried in his hand. He stepped back involuntarily, and so released the snake, on the point of whose tail he had been standing all the time. The snake then disappeared among the plants and long grass, and Mrs. Palmer rushed forward to find her husband safe. Had the glittering glass not attracted the reptile, the probability is that it would have struck the man, and so brought about his death.

The above adventure was not Mr. Palmer's only snake-experience. On a former occasion he was sitting on his own veranda, his arm leaning on a little table beside him. On this table there was also a glass of milk. He was sitting in that silent way in which a blind man will rest for hours, when he suddenly became aware of some animal lapping the milk in the glass at his elbow. Thinking that it was the cat, Mr. Palmer reached out his hand to drive the animal away. One can conceive his horror when he found he had placed his hand fair on the cold body of a large snake. One may conceive his happiness when he heard the dreadful creature glide gently away without attempting to do him any injury. This snake was subsequently killed, and measured about seven feet in length. It belonged to the brown species, and owed its death to the unbridled fondness which all snakes have for milk.

On one occasion, says another correspondent, I was walking with my wife over to the house of a neighbor, and to save ourselves a detour, we passed through a portion of the Bush that was generally very wet. It was known to be much frequented by snakes, and therefore generally avoided. Hearing a slight rustle beneath some brush, I looked in, and saw a sight which I had never seen before. A large snake had succeeded in securing a half-grown chicken, and was busily engaged in licking it all over, preparatory to swallowing it entire. I lay down on the ground beside it, and attentively watched the operation. My wife, who was less interested than I was, went on

to the house of our neighbor, and sent me assistance in the shape of a man with a loaded gun. The snake seemed so intent upon its work that my presence did not disturb it in the slightest. It was very methodical, cementing all the feathers the one way, so as to let the bird glide naturally and easily down the contracted orifice of its throat. Having slimed the body to its satisfaction the snake proceeded to swallow it. This it did by commencing at the head of the fowl. The head and neck disappeared slowly, and with a sort of sucking-in motion. It would be almost more correct to say that the snake crept outside and round the fowl. The mouth was gaped so much over the head and neck, we wondered how ever it could take in the body of the fowl. The snake's jaws were quite equal for the occasion. They even seemed to be capable of a little more distention, and gradually—bit by bit, jerk by jerk—the chicken disappeared, and the snake appeared the greater. The legs of the chicken hung out last, and slowly followed the body. What seemed strange was that the throat, which had enlarged to admit the body of the fowl, was now tight even for its legs. I judge by this that the pleasure of eating in snakes must be in the direct ratio of the size of the food bolted. The legs also disappeared; and we could distinctly trace the shape of the entombed fowl passing down the body of the snake in the same slow manner as it had entered by its mouth. The process of the eclipse of the chicken lasted over an hour, from the first point of contact till it was completely hidden. When the free exhibition had afforded us all the amusement we were likely to receive, a shot from the gun brought the career of the serpent to a close. It was a carpet snake, and measured eleven feet seven inches from head to tail.

A TALE OF LAKE ONTARIO.

By George H. Coomer.

THE day was warm, and the corn of my old Quaker employer high. Only himself and Donald, a Scotchman, were at work with me. In the outer man, we three had little in common. The broad brim of Friend Hezekiah's straw hat was at once a religious insigna and a sunshade; the Scotchman wore yet the Highland kilt in which he had leaped the bank of Niagara River; and I the navy blue that was mine in the President frigate.

The spirit that day moved not the good Quaker to discourse, and Donald was hardly more voluble than he; and thus we toiled on, out at one row and in at another, till there grew in the work an inexpressible tediousness, and my bones ached, and my soul was miserable.

While the hoes clattered, and the long leaves brushed me in the eyes, and toad, and cricket, and grasshopper started and sprang away, I recalled much to make me wretched. My mother had but lately passed from earth, and I thought how life must go on till I should be middle-aged, old, dead—yet never could she look on me again, nor I on her. At sixteen I had gone, much against her wish, with Commodore Rodgers in the President; and I could now feel what unhappiness that long absence must have caused her. I had returned on the very day that she sank in death, and it was her last request that I would never more tempt the deep.

My father, who died previously, had left his estate to my mother and me. Consisting wholly of personality property, it was placed in the hands of a merchant, named Hamilton, who soon after, with both principal and interest, fled to Canada. There was then no international law by which he could be reached; his securities proved worthless; and to myself, an immediate consequence of the loss was my engagement with the old Quaker farmer, till I should determine upon some more profitable occupation.

As the war of 1812 was in progress, I might have become a soldier; but I had learned on board the President to dislike soldiers, as my shipmates did. No, I could not be a soldier, with a musket and a car-

ridge-box. I thought constantly of the great broad topsails. Even in the Quaker's cornfield, I seemed to hear the flap and slat of the President's jib and spanker as she hove in stays; or the creak of her buntline-blocks as she hauled up her courses to wear ship; or her thunder and dash in the sea as she crowded sail in chase of a foe. I was in her when she chased the Belvidere, and witnessed the bursting of a long twenty-four pounder forward, by which accident, as the historical reader is aware, Commodere Rodgers was wounded.

But the last request of my mother shut me ever from the ocean, and the lakes, also, near one of which, Ontario, was the Quaker's home. Gladly would I have sailed that inland sea with Commodore Chauncey, whom I sometimes saw on shore superintending the construction of a new war vessel. I even feared that the old Quaker's niece must wonder at my inertness in these days of warlike enterprise. She was a beautiful girl of sixteen, and only half Quakeress, her mother having married one of the world's people. Both her parents were long since gone. Her father, a Fenchman, had left her some little property, and the name, novel among her mother's people, of Blanche La Mar.

She was now the ward of the Quaker farmer, and but for her I should perhaps have sought employment elsewhere rather than with Friend Hezekiah. She too had been defrauded by John Hamilton, and her heritage, like mine, having been wholly in money, had gone hopelessly beyond recall. Friend Hezekiah held therefore in his own meek way much bitterness against John Hamilton.

As the sun declined, after the tedious day, we all felt an inflow of vitality. It was apparent with the Quaker in the more rapid motion of his hoe, and with Donald in a warmer retrospect. I gathered that he had been at Acre, under Sir Sidney Smith, and at Aboukir, with Sir Ralph Abercrombie. He told us also of the fields of Spain; of red Vittora and Talavere; and of Victor and Marmont, of Soult and Suchet. Wounded at Barosa, he had fallen in the ranks of his people, just as the triumphant bagpipe drowned the French bugles and Victor was pushed from the field.

His term of service about this time expiring, and his wound rendering him incapable of immediate re-enlistment, he returned to Scotland; but it was only to encounter a poverty which upon his recovery forced him again into the army. He was now sent to Quebec. Thence up the St. Lawrence and across Lake Ontario he proceeded with the kilted Highlanders to Niagara River. The cause of his subsequent desertion he did not relate. He appeared to possess that stern sense of honor characteristic of the Scotch mountaineers, and to apprehend that a true account of the circumstances involved might be regarded as a story trumped up to extenuate his own disgrace.

"O' a' things," he said, "I canna 'bide a deserter! an' to think that I should be a deserter mysel'' But there was muckle cause!"

His hoe circled the last hill in the long corn-row, as he spoke, and looking up, he added:—

"A weel, the sun's gien his last blink, an' yon, I take' it, is the new war ship comin' doon the harbor!"

We had all day heard the chorus of seamen's voices come faintly from the town above, and knew it to proceed from Commodore Chauncey's new flagship, the General Pike. She now came slowly past the intervening hills, and dropping anchor in the stream, swung in the fading light directly opposite the field we were about quitting. In a few days, at furthest, she would join the American squadron. My reflections were exceedingly bitter. A noble ship of war at anchor at my very feet, and I slaving soul and body in the Quaker's cornfield! Yet my mother's wish was sacred, and I would not have disobeyed it to have commanded the entire navy of the republic.

I had heard much of Chauncey's repeated attempts on the lake to close with the British squadron; but that squadron; was of inferior force, and its gallant commander, Sir James Yoe, had evinced no less masterly qualities while manœuvering to avoid any engagement, than had the American while he was seeking to compel a fight.

As we crossed an eminence on our way to the farm-house, the dusky shapes of several vessels in company with each other, attracted our attention, and I had little doubt that this was the squadron of Sir James Yeo. It had lately, as I knew, been reinforced, and now perhaps felt itself more than a match for Chauncey, till the new flagship should be ready for sea. I wondered which of the number was the Wolf, the redoubtable ship of Sir James Yeo himself. Never, even

in boyhood, had I so longed to be on shipboard. What joy on the deck of the Pike to close with that famous Briton! I had heard the sailors on shore tell how they had chased the Wolf, and how they had been chased by her; as the advantage of position or force favored now this side and now that; and how the Wolf by a fortunate tack had cut off the Julia from Chauncey's squadron, at the very moment when that squadron was in full chase of her—such was the skillful seamanship of Sir James Yeo. The nautical ability of Chauncey was fettered by the wretched sailing qualities of his fleet; but it was hoped that the General Pike would fully match the Wolf.

That evening Blanche La Mar was very spiritual. I sat with her in the moonlight rehearsing the story of the workman Donald. She had been half afraid of him when two days before he first appeared at the farmhouse in his strange bonnet and kilt; but now she pictured him as "he wrapped his colors round his breast in a blood red field of Spain;" and her dark eyes beamed with a peculiar light, as if the peaceful spirit of her people were forgotten in the romance of war.

"Last night," she said, "I dreamed of armies, and there were bonnets and tartans all about me; and my father and mother were there also; and all day it has seemed to me that I remember something of my childhood as connected with things like these; or rather that I recollect another world that was mine before I was born."

She remained a few minutes silent, with a look of deep abstraction; then turning, tearfully, she said:—

"It is so strange, I know not what is the matter with me. I have surely seen your mother! I am awake, and yet I seem to be dreaming. Did you not see her? She was close at your side, but she is gone now; and she was bidding you to go to sea again—but you could not hear her. I heard her, and I feel both sorry and glad that she has released you from the promise."

"My mother! O Blanche, are you sure it was no illusion? But what if I were to go in the navy? Would you be sorry Blanche?"

"Oh, yes, I would be sorry, but then, if it would be best for you—surely she must know!"

"O Blanche! if I knew this—knew it to be her wish! And then you would not like that should go?"

"Only if it were for the best!"

"But I, too, must see her, or I must dream of her. I must know through my inner consciousness, that the injunction is removed. I feel that you have seen her—I doubt it not—yet no one can experience these things for another. And now, dear Blanche," I added, taking her hand, "would you weep for me if I were killed? Am I aught more to you than a friend? I cannot put my love in words, but to part with you forever would be worse than death!"

She looked tearfully up, and a gush of happiness filled my heart, as I met those dark blue eyes. But the shadow of her grandsire was at my very elbow. Luckily I saw it fall in the long slant moonbeam, ere he became aware of our presence. From the sternness of his speech, however, his suspicion of the truth was soon apparent. Poor Blanche was sent sorrowfully within doors, and the spirit moved Friend Hezekiah to treat me with unusual coolness. He objected to my evening interviews with Blanche, hinting very plainly his opinion that two young people in our condition would best be further asunder.

That night I lay long awake thinking of Blanche—of her strange vision, and the artless confession of love in her manner more than in her words—and then, falling asleep, I dreamed of my mother. The day had not broken when I awoke. I felt an unusual lightness of frame and buoyancy of spirit, like one refreshed by some mysterious influence that has hovered above his dreams. In a few minutes I became aware that all objects in the room had become as distinctly visible as by day, though I knew it to be still night, and at the same moment I recognized my mother standing at my bedside. I was not startled, not even surprised; but simply bethought myself that this was not a dream, and that my previous belief in the continued existance of the earthly dead was indeed true.

My own condition must have been less natural than spiritual, for I could plainly feel her hand as she passed it over my forehead, and even hear the sound of her slight movements.

"I have come back to you in love," she said, "and am always about you; but you cannot always see me. My request that you would not go to sea has troubled you. I see more clearly now, and I recall it. Go in the

General Pike! Blanche will wait for you and be young, and you will be both my children. Good-by!" she added, touching her face to mine—and the room became dark, and she was gone.

That morning I milked no cows, fed neither pigs nor poultry for Friend Hezekiah.

"Three years in the President, with Commodore Rodgers," was my reply to the brusk man in the shipping-office, upon his inquiring how much I had been to sea.

"That does not of necessity make you a sailor," he remarked, "but you have learned by this time what a man-of-war is. Put your name down here, and report at this office to-morrow at ten o'clock."

Blanche was attending to the household affairs when I return. I told her lovingly of my vision, not omitting its allusion to herself. But again the shadow of Friend Hezekiah, now falling in sunlight instead of moonlight, cast his broad-brim by the doorway, as if to image the wide cloud of poverty that hovered over my love. Our interview was ended; but Blanche wept in her own room, her eyes so plainly betraying the fact, as to draw upon her the reproof of both her grand-parents when she finally came forth to bid me farewell.

A superb ship was the General Pike, on board which I was sent. The entire squadron now lay at anchor at the foot of the broad farm where I had so lately attended the cattle and the corn, and to which a magnetic attraction still bound me in spirit. The rising sun was just sending his fiery arrows over Lake Ontario, when the signal was made to get underway. Away out upon the lake, and barely visible, was the fleet of Sir James Yoe. I was a foretopman, and when sent up to loose the topgallant-sail, I saw the roof of the old Quaker farm-house, among its hundred trees. In the long green lane that reached shoreward, were Friend Hezekiah, in his sober straw hat, and Donald in his dusty tartan. They had shouldered their hoes, and were just coming a-field. I could distinguish the space between the goodly rows of corn by the ranks of bayonet-like spindles. I heard the bob-o'-link and the shrill cry of the pewit. On the high topgallant-yard, casting off the gaskets and overhauling the clewlines, I was not proof against a certain feeling of homesickness at these sights and sounds of shore, associated as they were with thoughts of Blanche.

The fleet was soon under full sail, and as we stood off shore and began to feel the long swell of the lake, the English squadron bore away from us. Presently, however, it tacked and headed athwart our course, as if Sir James Yoe was not averse to an engagement, or was anxious to ascertain the sailing qualities of his new opponent, the Pike. We ran down till within four miles of him, when again he kept away, and the most exciting chase commenced. The General Pike proved an excellent sailer, and gained fast on the enemy, but all the while they and ourselves were dropping the main portion of our fleet astern. At sunset those of the British vessels that were ahead of the others began to shorten sail, with the evident object of concentrating the whole force of the squadron upon the American flagship. Our consorts were ten miles astern, and we were forced to tack ship, losing two men by the fire of the enemy, but putting our mark upon several of Sir James Yoe's vessels. For a few minutes the British force was all in chase, and Commodore Chauncey hoped that this manœuvre would bring on a general battle; but the shrewd English baronet, finding that he had not fully caught us in the trap he had set, made signal to again bear away. The superiorty of his fleet over the main body of ours in sailing qualities was a certain advantage which he did not intend to forego for the doubtful chances of an engagement on equal terms. It was a stirring sight in the sunset dusk—that of the curling smoke from the twenty-four pounders, the swelling sails of the ships, and the blood-red battle flags.

Next morning the enemy were again in sight, and Sir James having the weather gage appeared not averse to a battle; but he was soon at his old trick again, of manœuvering to separate our vessels, as when he captured the Growler and Julia. Commodore Chauncey signalled the fleet to bear up close-hauled on the wind, and as the British now stood from us, we passed a hawser from the Pike to the Asp, the next best sailer, thus taking her in tow, in order that we might not fall into a trap as on the day previous.

The chase became very exciting, the dull sailing vessel of our squadron doing better than usual, and the Pike, in spite of her encumbrance, steadily gaining. She was deep and weatherly, while the Wolf, being of shallow build, was not remarkable for speed

except when well off the wind. Sir James now kept in the rear of his squadron, as if determined to bear the brunt of the battle should an engagement become unavoidable. Our "tow," the Asp, though, of course, crowding all sail, and doing her very best, was a constant hindrance to the flagship. The great hawser rose and fell alternately, now vissible for half its length; now springing out of the water with a sharp cutting sound, and straightening in a prodigious pull, and sent the fine mist flying from its strands. The cornfield of Friend Hezekiah had nothing like this; and how quickly had the current of my experience changed from only the visions of the inner consciousness to the fresh strong scenes of the active world. I thought of Blanche, and felt now more worthy of her amid the rude stern poetry of these sails and banners.

Sir James Yoe at length made signal to tack, as if he had finally decided to risk an engagement; but we soon discovered that this was not his purpose; for having failed in his object of scattering our fleet, he shrewdly determined upon running to leeward, thereby putting his own shallow vessel on their best sailing point, and the deeper craft of his pursuer on their worst. Instantly the Pike opened upon him, stoutly seconded by the Asp, and for a few minutes it seemed as if a general battle must ensue. The Wolf fought gallantly, but all the while she kept under full sail, and well of the wind. Soon her main and mizzen topmasts went overboard with a crash that was answered by three cheers from the Pike. Our twenty-four pounders sent spars and rigging splintered, and towing under her quarter; but her commander was equal to the emergency. Her helm was put hard up and the Wolf fell off dead before the wind. Then with every stitch of canvas he could crowd on his foremast. Sir James squared in his yards and bore to leeward. The loss of the Wolf's after-spars did not much injure her sailing on this point, and the whole British Squadron now began to leave us astern. With the Pike alone we could have outsailed the fastest of the enemy's vessels, but the Asp so deadened our way, and the fleet could so poorly support us, that the commodore abandoned the chase; but the manœuvres on both sides had shown the two commanders to be masters of their art. How excited were the old tars that day and evening, and what yarns they spun of their adventures in the Constitution, the United States, the Wasp, and the Hornet!

There was one Jack Smith, a foretopman, who had been impressed in the British navy. He was with Nelson at the Nile, and afterwards belonged to the small force of sailors which cooperated with the Turks in the defence of Acre. When he spoke of the latter place, I thought of Donald and my last days in the Quaker's cornfield; and especially so while he described the plaided Highlanders, who under Colonel Douglas took part in that murderous fight. But what most interested me was his relation of an incident that took place during a sally of the Scotch, English and Turks combined, wherein they penetrated a portion of the French camp. Horses were plunging, wagons overthrown, and bayonet, and cimetar, and claymore were red with blood. Upon the return of the sallying party a Scotchman named Donald McGregor brought back in his arms a little French girl of four years, whose life he had saved as she fell from a baggage wagon when its wounded and frantic horses had overturned it in the very midst of the broadswords. But for the great-hearted Highlander the poor little creature must have been crushed to a shapeless mass by boot, and hoof, and wheel. How she came to be left in a position so perilous was uncertain; but the French, Jack said, had some women and children with them about the camp, and the little girls protectors might have been killed or lost her in the uproar of the sudden attack; or the baggage-wagon might have been at some distance, till the horses, losing their driver by a shot, ran madly into the midst of the fray.

Afterwards on board the Goilath, seventy-four, to which ship he belonged, Jack saw the same little girl with her broad-breasted preserver in his kilt and Highland bonnet. She made a fine playmate for the Scotchman's own child, a little girl of not more than three years old; but what caused Jack particularly to remember the latter was the fact that in Egypt she suddenly disappeared —lost like a precious little gem which one might imagine he could find in a moment, having mislaid it, but which through days, and weeks, and months, is never seen again, and is finally lamented as gone forever. There are gipseys in Egypt as everywhere else, though they are not native to that country more than to any other, and the Scotchman, with whom Jack conversed

some time after the loss of the child, and down whose hardy cheeks the tears started as he related the circumstances, was of the opinion that a band of these people had carried the little one into the interior. They were often in the British camp and on board the ships, and had told the fortunes of both the little children. After this affair Jack said the Highlander and his wife, who, as was the case with many soldiers' wives, accompanied her husband in all the operations of the army, clung to the little girl so miraculously preserved at Acre, with a perfect idolatry; seeming to think her a heaven-sent child, whose beautiful presence must in some degree repair the loss of their own darling. Jack was greatly in love with the Scotch, and this stout Highlander he regarded as finely representing that brave and noble race.

I told him of Donald, Friend Hezekiah's new-come workman, and how he, too, had been at Acre and in Egypt. The coincidence of name and locality impressed the old sailor strongly, but the surname of my whilom fellow-laborer I was unable to give.

"Queer," Jack remarked, "if that should be the very man; but then the Scotch have more Donalds than a ship has bolts; besides the Donald that I knew never would have deserted his colors; so I allow it's some fellow that's trumped up a yarn about Acre and old Sideny Smith; but I'd like to fall in wi h him, I could soon tell if he knows anything about Bonaparte's grenadiers, for I remember how they appeared as they came charging into the breach; and just how the Highlanders, and the Turks, and the sailors fell afoul of them the moment they got inside."

In spite of Jack's incredulity I could not help feeling that Friend Hezekiah's soldier farm hand was the hero of my shipmate's story. Many other yarns the foretopman related of his experience in the British service, yet none that so much interested me; but presently it was morning, and there was little thought of but the fleet of Sir James Yeo.

We had chased the British Squadron considerable to the westward, but Sir James was not in sight, having probably stood to the northward after dark in an endeavor to regain Kingston, the principal naval port on the enemy's side of the lake, which, however, he would not be able to do immediately, from the prevalance of an easterly wind that held both him and ourselves to leeward of our respective ports. In the course of the day we captured a British brig which had been away to the western extremity of Lake Ontario, and was bound back to Kingston. This vessel was a merchant-man, and being in herself valuable, besides having on board a lot of choice furs, the commander gave her a prize crew of which I happened to be one, and ordered her into port. But the wind continued to head us off, as it did also the fleet, and being unable to keep up with the vessels of war as they tacked now northward and southward, we lost sight of them.

The prize had on board two women, mother and daughter, who from the Canadian side of Niagara River had sailed in her, hoping to reach a relative who resided at Kingston. The American commodore, not knowing what engagements might yet occur between himself and the enemy, had thought it best for the two passengers that they should continue in the captured vessel; but as yet we had obtained hardly a glimpse of them. Our crew consisted of a midshipman, a master's mate and seven men; and after a time I heard the midshipman, Mr. Rhodes, tell his subordinate officer that the young girl was extremely handsome, and that the mother had lately lost her husband. They were Scotch, he added, and he felt a sympathy for them in their unhappy condition. Not long after I had a view of both their faces. The mother was of prepossessing appearance, though manifestly of the peasantry; and the girl possessed a beauty that was remarkable.

In the bad weather that followed the brig fell off so much that to avoid going ashore we anchored under the lee of a headland on the Canadian side of the lake waiting for a change of wind. Shortly after there dropped anchor to windward of us a schooner from the head of the lake for Kingston, and rough as was the weather a boat from her immediately boarded us. One of the boat's crew was captain of the schooner, while another, a large burly man, who seemed to be a person of some consequence, we judged to be an agent of the British government, or a trader among the Indians up the lake.

Mr. Rhodes of course represented his vessel as English; but it seemed to me that our visitors seemed taken aback by an unexpected state of things when they first stepped on board, though they immediately

rallied, showing as little constraint and embarrassment as possible. I had seen John Hamilton, the defaulting debtor to my father's estate, only once, and that was years before, for the affair of the property had happened during my absence from home, but my imperfect remembrance of him was recalled by something in the appearance of the burly trader, though I was far from feeling positive that this was the same man.

"I think they suspect us," said Mr. Rhodes, as the boat pulled back to the schooner, "and if so they may give us trouble, for they seem to have a very large crew. They may have seen this vessel before; I couldn't help thinking of that while we were talking. It will soon be dark, but we must not allow them to surprise us."

Already the night was gathering, and should there be no change of weather nothing would be easier than for the schooner to drop afoul of us, as she was dead to windward. But from a wild lightning up of the sky to leeward it was evident that such a manœuvre, if performed at all, could not be long delayed, as the shift of wind would bring the enemy under our lee, and besides it promised to blow with great violence.

"I think, sir," said Jack Smith presently, "they are heaving their cable short now. It wont do for them to wait, for the wind will be out here with a vengeance in a few minutes."

They were indeed getting up anchor, for they meant bnsiness. It would hardly do to slip their cable in such a state of the weather, and besides the English wished to retain the power of bringing their vessel up at any moment should she threaten to drift clear of us.

"It may not be quite like the Nile, Jack," coolly remarked Mr. Rhodes to the old foretopman, Jack Smith, "but on a small scale we must all be Nelsons!"

"Wouldn't all Decaturs, sir, do as well?" replied Jack, touching his hat. "I was with Decatur when he boarded the old Philadelphia in Tripoli Harbor."

Meantime Mr. Rhodes was briskly moving. He ordered us to lie down under the shelter of some old spars that were lashed against the bulwarks, and to keep our arms ready for instant action. Stern foremost the schooner neared us, and there was no hail from either side.

Before a collision occured the wind shifted, piping first aloft and then roaring athwart the deck. As it came round astern the brig shot ahead, and the schooner's mainmast, as we struck her on the quarter, carried away our jibboom. At the same moment her crew, who had apparently been lying down, sprang to their feet and poured in a volley of musketry. Mr. Rhodes fell dead, and the master's mate was mortally wounded. They had inadvertently exposed themselves at the very moment of greatest danger. Leaping up from our cover we returned the fire in a manner which so completely surprised the enemy as to defeat their intention of boarding; and ere they were able to reload for a second volley, the roaring tornado gave both them and ourselves sufficient employment.

The vessels were almost instantly separated from each other, heeling over with the lee rail to the water as they swung around, and though the Englishman dropped both his anchors he dragged very fast. So also did the brig, both vessels drifting directly out into the lake. The brig at length parting her cables, we succeeded in getting her off before the wind; but realizing that at this rate she would in a few hours be upon the opposite shore of the lake, we presently brought her under bare poles, the long slack cables assisting to keep her head to the gale.

Having no captain, we were under the necessity of creating a "government," and I being the only soul on board who understood navigation, though Jack Smith was by far the best seaman, it was decided that I should command. The foretopman would act as a kind of "wet nurse" to my inexperience; and "wet" enough he was too, as were all the rest of us, for the spray went over the foreyard, and the sea though not heavy, was right up and down.

After a time I set the two topsails, close-reefed, to diminish the brig's leeway; and when morning broke it was quiet a relief to discern that no land was yet in sight to leeward. It would be many hours before the New York shore would give us trouble, but should the gale continue long enough, there could be only one result at last; for the reefed topsails were all that the brig could possible carry, and there was no holding our own.

In my new office of prize captain I went below to inquire after the comfort of the two passengers. I had expected to find them very ill, but they were not so. The

mother informed me that in their passage but a short time previously from Scotland they had encountered such tempestuous weather as to have since become proof against sea-sickness. Their present position, however, greatly alarmed them; but they were soothed by my assurance that no immediate danger threatened the vessel, and that I deeply sympathized with them in their peculiar circumstances of family affliction and capture by a national enemy. They seemed cheered and grateful.

Where had I met the beautiful Highland girl? I wished to tell how familiar that sweet face appeared to me. Had I seen her in a dream or in a picture? From a sympathetic feeling I was beginning to relate to herself and her mother my acquaintance with their countryman Donald, when Jack Smith came into the cabin with some questions relative to the state of affairs on deck.

"We did so," he said, "aboard the old Goilath, off the coast of Egypt," referring incidentally to a piece of seamanship which the present emergency recalled to memory.

"Was it the English ship of the line —— the Goilath?" timidly asked the Scotch woman.

"Yes, madam," said Jack. "I was in her at the Nile, and afterwards we went up the coast of Asia Minor to Acre, when it was besieged by Bonaparte."

"I was sometime in the same ship myself," said the Highland dame, "with my husband, for it was the Goilath that transported the Scottish soldiers. Did ye ken puir Donald McGregor the while?"

In a moment Jack and she were such friends as a mutual remembrance of old scenes can sometimes instantly make. So this was the wife of that brave Scottish soldier of whom the foretopman had told me; and this beautiful young girl by her side the same whom the gallant Highlander had preserved from death amid the thunders of Bonaparte's cannon. How happy was the Scotch dame to meet one who remembered scenes that lived so vividly with herself. But my original idea of a close connection between the Donald that Jack remembered and the Donald of Friend Hezekiah's broad fields, returned with almost a positive conviction. Mrs. McGregor, in answer to Jack's inquiries, sobbingly spoke of her husband's death.

"May I ask if he fell in battle?" I inquired.

"He did not," she replied, and then added convulsively, "I might almost say he was murdered. A villanous officer spoke in a shameful manner of our Margaret here, and my husband struck him to the earth. For this he was sentenced to be shot, but I found means to liberate him from the prison where he lay, and he fled. In attempting to cross Niagara River he was fired upon, and they hae told me he is dead. I hae never seen him frae the night that I bade him flee. I would meet him in the States—that was our plan—but it is all over now; and weel as we loved each other, we shall meet nae mair on earth."

"Mrs. McGregor," I said, "it is not impossible that your husband may still be alive. I am acquainted with a Highland soldier whose christian name is Donald; his surname I do not know, he was at Acre and Aboukir, he served in Spain, and was wounded at Bassora. For some reason with which I am unacquainted, he deserted the troops while they were stationed near Niagara River, swam the stream, and was a week since at work for a farmer in the State of New York. If the gale will spare us, you shall ere long see him for yourself."

Greatly was the Scottish matron overcome by the revelation. So was the young girl, her Margaret, in whom the foretopman would never have recognized her whom he remembered to have been so miraculously preserved amid the uproar and havoc of Acre, and who had ever been to her foster-parents as dear as their own little one whom the gipsey stole in Egypt from the camp of Sir Ralph Abercrombie.

And now as I looked at Margaret, it occurred to me suddenly why her features had appeared so familiar at first sight. Did she not exactly resemble a picture in the parlor of Friend Hezekiah's great farm-house? This was a portrait of Blanche La Mar's mother, so beautiful that I had loved to look upon it—not at all like Blanche, either; though equally as lovely. Why should this girl, caught up from destruction at St. Jean d' Acre, so resemble the mother of Blanche La Mar?

Often during the day I entered the cabin to speak briefly with my two passengers in whom I now felt great interest; and I thought of Donald, and how we had labored side by side in the unromantic corn on that August day, and how rejoiced he would be at the sight of that precious freight which I

now had in store for him. But at length I almost feared that his desolate heart must remain in desolation still for aught that my endeavors might avail, for the gale increased and our reefed sails were torn from the yards. The brig made a dead lee drift of four miles an hour, and upon that inland sea this could not long continue. The wind must change or lull, or we must go ashore, with the chances ten to one that not a soul would be saved.

At times we caught sight of a schooner to leeward, and had little doubt that our belligerent acquaintance of the night previous was battling the waves as hopelessly as we; she having probably at first run off before the wind further than had the brig. The night following was passed drearily. It seemed as if the northerly storm would never abate, and even had we numbered a hundred instead of seven, there would have been only the same tedious thing to do—to wait helplessly for the worst.

At morning we were close aboard the schooner. Her main boom was gone, her foresail blown away, and her decks were completely swept by the high, short, ugly sea, such as a storm creates on the lakes. At one moment, as the two vessels pitched and wallowed with the white foam leaping about them, and a few shreds of canvas clinging to the bolt-ropes, we were very near falling afoul of the Briton. But this seemed almost a matter of indifference, for the shore was now fairly seen under our lee, and whether we should sink here, or be dashed to destruction there, appeared a question which admitted of little choice. Was I never to see Blanche La Mar again, or the farm-house of old Hezekiah?

For a moment I despaired, then confidence sprang anew. I had never forgotten the vision which bade me go to sea, and under, all difficulties the remembrance had given me hope. "Go in the General Pike!" had been the counsel of my mother's spirit, and surely that spirit would not have pointed me towards destruction. I would yet see Blanche again, and the cornfield of the broad-brimmed Quaker, though I doubted not that its long green rows were now levelled.

With my glass I could soon plainly see the land. Right well I knew the shore. There were the hills and vales I had so often traversed; and there, too, was the harbor from which I had sailed in the Pike.

"Jack," I cried, "if we can get her before the wind we can run into the bay."

We essayed it, but she steered badly before the wind even after we had cut away the main-mast, and presently she broached completely to again. Though the wind was fast dying away, the sea ran as high as ever, and at length with a shock that brought our gentle passengers hurriedly on deck, we struck the shore near the harbor's mouth. The beach so beaten by the furious sea bordered the farm of Friend Hezekiah, which extended to both the harbor and the lake, making a corner as it were. The house whose roof we could see in the distance was Friend Hezekiah's house. Who were they by the beach? Who but Friend Hezekiah himself and Donald McGregor? A boat in such a sea would be useless, and in what manner could the Quaker and his workman assist us?

It seemed almost impossible that any one could be saved, for the shore was rocky, and the sea combed and broke in with a frightful roar. In an hour the vessel's timbers had so far given way that the deck started off. Now deeply buried by the thundering breakers, now tossed aloft, and now rolled over and over, we struggled to retain our hold of the torn fragments of timber and plank as they went pitching and shooting from roller to roller.

Jack Smith and myself had struggled with all our might to sustain the two Scotch women in their position on a portion of the deck till it should reach the shore; but no sooner did it dash against the rocks at a distance of fifty yards from dry land, than the undertow, like a great sea monster, drew it savagely back to deep water. Three or four times did this occur, and then as the fragment of wreck rose edgdwise and turned completely bottom up, I felt myself struck by a hoof of a swimming horse, and saw the animal's head close to my own. Upon the back of the horse was Donald McGregor. How little was this scene like that in the Quaker's cornfield, when we had hoed out our rows, and Donald said, "Aweel, the sun has given his last blink!" And yet I remembered that scene and that saying just as distinctly as if the foaming rollers of Lake Ontario had not been making sport with my struggle for life. We are all made up with layers of impression.

Donald grasped the two women by the hair. He could see it "like the brown sea-

weed in the billows fall and rise," and it afforded the only trustworthy hold. How he got them through the undertow and to the firm shore, with the breakers about him, and his floundering, snorting horse frightened and half unmanageable, I was not then permitted to know. I saw only that it was the same horse wherewith Friend Hezekiah had been used to plow among his corn, and with which Blanche La Mar had often in Quaker style ridden to the neighboring town.

My head was softer than a rock with which it came in contact, and of death or life I should have know no more had the battle been left to be fought out between the elements and myself. I have, as my last memory of that moment, a confused recollection of a rough floor of pebbles, of slipping edges of rock, and of a sea that hissed in my ears and blinded my eyes.

When I again looked about me I was in the well-known room where so lately I had seen the spirit of my mother, and from which I had started in the gray of morning to seek a voyage in the General Pike. I had been a week insensible. Blanche was rejoiced at my convalescence; and she wept in a manner which reminded me of a sweet rain of May time, when her sensitive spirit recalled the sorrows of the past, in connection with the hopes which now she dared to entertain of the future.

What a wonderful thing, she thought, that the terrible gale should have brought the loved ones of Donald to the very door of the house where he dwelt. And still more wonderful was it that Margaret was not Donald's daughter, after all, but the daughter of Eugene La Mar and his quakeress wife, and the granddaughter of Friend Hezekiah; while Blanche herself was Donald's daughter, lost in Egypt. And now she saw why she had so often thought of tartans and bagpipes as things which she must have known in some state of pre-existence.

There was a very curious mark upon one of Blanche's arms, made when she was a year old by the claw of an eagle which among the Highlands attempted to carry her off. The gipsey who had finally given her up to Mr. La Mar, had informed him when dying that she had stolen the little girl from the train of Sir Ralph Abercrombie. So the name of my little half-Quakeress was not Blanche La Mar, but Jessie McGregor, a name with a thousand times more meaning and a thousand times more strength.

And Donald's Margaret was Marguerite La Mar, a name plainly written on one of those pretty articles of dress which she wore when preserved at Acre. The thousand obstacles interposed by war had rendered it difficult to obtain information concerning the little waifs, and so the matter had passed.

John Hamilton, too, had proved an important witness. He had been with the French army and in company with Mr. La Mar. John Hamilton, our old debtor—how had he been heard from within the week. A schooner, as Blanche, or rather Jessie informed me, had been lost on the beach at the same time with the brig, and only one person was saved. He proved to be Mr. Hamilton, a large burly man, and the same, as I at once saw from Jessie's description, who had boarded our brig on the Canadian shore. So my impression was well-founded; and now the slippery renegade was to be held till he should fork over our due, which, however, could not be done till after the return of peace.

Friend Hezekiah had always known that the beautiful girl in his household was not his grand-daughter, but he wished not to speak of it; and thus she had passed for the child of that pretty Quakeress who married a Frenchman, and with her husband traveled in Europe, in Asia Minor, and in Egypt.

Very fast I recovered from the shock received upon the rocky beach; and as the restoration of my twenty thousand dollars seemed more probable, the Quaker farmer abated his coolness in the presence of my evident partiality for the daughter of Donald McGregor. In five months we read the proclamation of peace, and soon John Hamilton paid over the money due his creditors, as he was abundantly able to do through drafts on Canada.

With the thrift of his countrymen, Donald McGregor, once in a free land, soon made head against poverty. I forced upon my soldier father-in-law, for I need hardly say that Jessie and I were soon married, such pecuniary assistance as he would accept; but he had great love of independence, and was not easily made the recipient of such material aid and comfort.

Marguerite was married to an officer of Chauncey's squadron; and I do not know but Friend Hezekiah loved his newly-found grandchild as dearly as he did the daughter of the Highlander.

Jack Smith, who was saved when our prize was driven ashore, did not outlive the war. Transferred to the Atlantic sea-board, when the lakes were bound with ice, he was sent on board the glorious old President. In the battle of that grand old frigate with the Endymion, Tenedos, and Pomona, as stationed on the gun-deck, and stripped to the waist, he was working at a great twenty-four pounder, his head was carried completely away by an eighteen-pound ball from the Tenedos.

It would not be possible to express the happiness I felt in the long winter evenings, when Donald, coming in, would sit beside our hearth with his stories of Vittora and Bassora, and his conceptions of Marmont and Wellington, of Soult and Sir John Moore.

AUNT PRUE'S DINNER.

A THANKSGIVING STORY.

"SOUR bread again, dear," said, or rather growled, Walter Allison, a rising young lawyer, as he pushed his plate away.

"Do you think it is sour, Wally? It seemes to me to taste only a little of the yeast."

"Yeast? There's always an excuse, you know. It wasn't yeast that made the coffee bitter yesterday."

"But it hasn't been bitter before for months."

"It should never be. It seems to me a woman has time enough to attend to all these trifling matters. I never knew my Aunt Prue to make a mistake. Pray, write to her and get her recipe for bread. It was the lightest, sweetest"—

He looked up in astonishment. Bessy, his loving little Bessy, had rushed from the room.

"Always Aunt Prue! Always Aunt Prue!" cried Bessy, walking the floor of her chamber distractedly. "I'm so tired of fault-finding when I am doing my best. I'm almost sorry——. But no; I will not say that. 'For better, for worse.' Oh, dear me! I'll write to Aunt Prue, and tell her all about it."

As she sat down to her little writing-desk a thought occured to her, which provoked a perplexed and yet amused smile, and her pen was set speedly at work. We will only copy a sentence or two.

"I know that 'Wally' is the apple of your eye, as, indeed, he is of mine; but he has been so accustomed to your excellent housekeeping to 'be cooked and cared for,' as he says, by his dear Aunt Prue, that he is a little, just a little, exacting. I know that I was a poor housekeeper when we were first married, and then he was so very patient that I could not but try my best to improve; and having put my heart and will in the work, I think my efforts have been successful.

"Indeed, I do my best to please him, but—

"You cannot tell with what delight I look forward to your long-promised visit. We have talked of it, for weeks—baby, Walter, and I—and our little one has learned some sweet words of welcome for Aunt Prue. They sound so prettily from her cheery lips.

"But to the point; Walter is a good husband. Oh, don't think I like to speak of a single fault; but I must tell you how he disheartens me. When I think I have seasoned some favorite dish entirely to his liking, he is sure to find that I fail in something. 'Wait till Aunt Prue comes,' 'Just ask Aunt Prue how she does this or that,' or I'd give half I'm worth'—which ain't much, poor fellow—'to taste one of Aunt Prue's nice dinners.' Now, aunty, as we expect you here next week, for Thanksgiving dinner, without Walter's knowledge, of course.

"'Saucy minx!' I fancy you will be tempted to say; and indeed I believe it is a little impertinent; but, nevertheless, I hope you will accede to the request, because you see I am almost desperate.

"There is some humor in the arrangement too, as I look at it, and I know you enjoy fun; so please say 'yes.' Then we shall see if Walter's criticisms are just, or whether that odious wolf-habit has fastened his fangs

so strongly upon my dear, good husband, that he is almost, or quite, unconscious of his fault."

Such was part of the letter received by Miss Prue Webster, and which she read by her cheerful open grate.

"The poor child!" she murmured, taking off her spectacles. "The pretty, proud little thing! Wally must have transgressed, indeed, to bring out a plaint like that, for under all the playfulness there is a cry that goes to my heart. I know how it is, for his father was so before him. Yes, he must have a lesson, and Bessy has hit upon just the thing. How much I shall enjoy his criticism either way."

So she wrote to the niece she had never met in person, that she would cook the dinner, and then refresh her imagination by looking at Bessy's photograph.

She had well called her proud, pretty little thing. Such sweetness and such pride are seldom combined in the same countenance. Every feature was replete with beauty of its kind. The nose straight and delicate, the lips firm, yet tenderly arched; the eyes smiling and lustrous; the face a perfect oval; and, to crown all, the soft, wavy hair thrown carelessly from the low brow, and braided in a massive coronet. This was the picture of which Walter had written just two years ago, as follows:—

"It is not half as beautiful as the original; color, motion and grace are wanting. But oh, aunty, she's a thousand times too lovely and too good for me. Shall I ever be worthy of such a treasure?"

"And now, since she has condescended to step down from the pedestal of worship, and care for and cook for him, he must needs find fault with every effort she makes to please his fastidious palate," she said indignantly. "I'll give him a lesson." And she indulged her sense of amusement by contemplating the sort of punishment she intended to mete out to her erring nephew.

The last of November came, and when Walter returned home one night, he said:—

"I had a telegram this morning. Aunt Prue will be here by the seven o'clock train to-morrow. I suppose you have everything ready?"

"Quite ready," was Bessy's reply, "and very anxious to make her comfortable. Would you like to see her room?"

"Well, yes, I don't care if I do," said Walter, who had come home in an exceptionable good humor; and taking little Lulu upon his shoulder, the child crowing with delight; he followed his wife up-stairs, thinking very probable he might be able to suggest some improvement. It was his way rather to suggest alterations than to speak well of what was already done.

"Don't you think you've looped the curtains too low?" he queried. "And isn't it rather childish to tie them with blue?"

"I thought blue was your favorite color," said Cessy, who had fancied her arrangement of the one bay-window a masterpiece.

"Yes; but—you see the hanging basket in the centre, being necessarily composed of green plants and vines, makes the contrast unpleasant."

"True enough," said Bessy, with the least possible tinge of sarcasm in her voice. "I might have looped them with green, but then, you see, I've had to have draped the toilet with green; and the carpet, happening to be blue and fawn, perhaps the contrast might have been still more unpleasant. Shall I take the basket down? You know you said your aunt was fond of plants."

"Perhaps if she is, she may not like them in her bed-room. However, let the thing be," he added graciously. "I would loop the curtains a foot higher, though."

"And spoil it all," said Bessy, almost petulantly, for she often of late found herself inclined to "snap" under the constant succession of mildly irritating criticisms in which her husband indulged.

"No—render the effect a hundred times prettier. But no matter. I am a man, and I suppose my opinion goes for nothing. Still I would like to see the curtains changed."

Little Lulu, meantime, applauded her mother's handiwork with loud acclamations. "Pitty, pitty!" she cried, pursing up her rosy mouth, and clapping her baby hands, as she looked from point to point.

"Wouldn't blue have looked better upon the bed?" asked Walter, whose wide glances could find no fault in all the other arrangements.

"It seemed to me white was more appropriate," Bessy made answer; "but if you prefer the blue I will put it on."

"Most decidedly," said Walter, delighted with this concession. "I knew the room wanted something, and that was it. I am sure you will be better pleased yourself. It won't be much trouble. You've all day to-morrow, and I particularly want Aunt Prue

to be pleased. From what I have said of you, she will have no ordinary expectations as to your taste and ability. So do me honor."

It was always *me* with lordly Walter Allison. Bessy looked up in the face of her tall, handsome, stalwart husband, as he stood there, so kingly in his beauty, the lovely babe still smiling from his shoulder; one chubby arm encircling his neck; one dimpled, white-fingered hand half hidden in his luxuriant whiskers.

Superb in his royal privilege as dictator and commander, how could he fathom the expression of that too pale, yet tender face, whose sweet serenity his thoughtless fault-finding so often clouded? And yet she was grieving that moment because he so seldom praised her.

The next day Aunt Prue came punctually at seven in the evening. Bessy, the baby, everything, looked charming by gaslight. As to Aunt Prue, Bessy's first longing was to fall on her bosom, and feel herself encircled by such an embrace as she fancied her mother would have given her, for Bessy's mother had been in heaven many years.

Aunt Prue was very weary, being unused to traveling, and declined supper, taking only a glass of milk, and retiring almost immediately.

"How do you like her?" asked Walter.

"Very much. I am sure I shall love her very dearly, before long."

"I think you will. Has she not a lovely face? She is not as beautiful as my mother was, but she has always seemed like a mother to me. We must try to make her visit enjoyable. The only thing I tremble about is the table—the fare. Of course, you will do the best you can, but there is a knack about these things, I might almost say a genius, which only the favored few possess. I was glad she declined the supper; she is so very particular about her tea. I dread to-morrow's dinner more than I can tell. It will be Thanksgiving and we ought to have something fine."

"Why should you dread it?" asked Bessy, looking up.

"Oh, I am sure you will do your best. I believe you always do your best," he repeated, in a way that intimated quite plainly "but that best is poor."

Bessy smiled, but he did not see her.

"You think I am very particular about my food," he went on. "Wait till you taste some of Aunt Prue's dishes, and you will understand why. Food well cooked and assimilated has much to do with the spiritual, as well as the physical being of man. It makes the monster good-natured, too. Why, I have tasted a bitter cup of coffee all day, and, likely as not, been cross to my clerks on account of it. So you see how much depends upon the *cuisine*. Now, suppose we make out a bill of fare."

The next morning at breakfast Walter made a wry face three times, and quite as many excuses for everything that was served. Aunt Prue said nothing, though she enjoyed her meal. But she took mental notes.

Bessy did not look as well by daylight; an expression of fatigue persuaded her whole being. The baby had been restless; Walter's way evidently annoyed her. She had worked too hard at this well-arranged breakfast.

"I will go now to the office," said Walter, as he rose from the table. "That will give you, Bessy, and Aunt Prue, a good long morning together."

"It isn't possible that you do all the cooking?" said Aunt Prue, as the two women left the dining-room, Bessy holding the heavy baby.

"The girl helps me a little," was Bessy's reply, "and is willing to do more; but Walter is always dissatisfied with her cooking. Indeed Aunt Prue, it is a great pleasure to me—if I could only please him; but since baby came it is not always possible. I had a nurse for a time, but Walter objects to a nurse; and it is hard to get a good one."

"How often do you go out?" asked Aunt Prue.

"How often? Oh, dear me! I haven't been outside of the house for months, hardly," was the answer with a nervous laugh.

"How men do yoke and goad their angels?" said Aunt Prue, half to herself.

"What did you say, Aunt Prue?"

"I was thinking of an expression in one of Walter's love letters."

"Oh?" and Bessy's cheek grew radiant with a girlish blush.

"I mean one of his letters to me, when he was in love, in which he makes mention of a certain angel."

"Indeed?" and Bessy laughed in her olden fashion.

"We must take him in hand," said Aunt

Prue seriously. "'This all work and no play' will never answer. I'm sure, my dear, if you always give him half such nice meals as that of this morning he has no right to complain."

"But you saw"—— said Bessy, timidly.

"Yes, yes, I saw that he was trying to make the food more palatable by underrating it. But never mind; we'll try and establish a cure. Now, to-day I'll get up one of my best dinners, and you shall do nothing but look on. Just give me a kitchen apron, my dear, and wish me good speed."

They had a merry time of it that morning. Baby was happy and jolly under the superintendence of her mother; the oven worked to a charm, and everything was in readiness for the lord of the household, who awaited dinner with more than a little trepidation, quite unconscious that the aunt, paler than usual from exertion, and the wife overflushed from anticipation, had changed places expressly on his account.

So they sat down to dinner, each one more or less expectant. Walter ran his eye over the table.

"Bessy, dear, I don't think it's an improvement to stack the knives and forks over the napkins, like a parcel of guns," he said. "Tell Mary I like the other way best. Ah, quite too rare, I'm afraid!" as he plunged his knife into the beef. "Aunt Prue, I'm afraid I can't suit you to-day. I remember how throughly your roasts were always done, and yet were juicy. The gravy is browner than usual," he added dipping into the dish. "I don't know about the butter-beans, yours were always delicious." And so on to the end of the chapter. For every dish there was some hint or glance of disparagement, and it was all Bessy could do, with her almost painful sense of ludicrous, to keep from laughing outright, as occasionally Aunt Prue's speaking eyes met hers.

"I'm so sorry, Aunt Prue," said Bessy, at last, mustering all the gravity she could command, "that after you having taken the trouble to get up this nice dinner expressly for Walter, he should have found fault with everything you have done."

"What?" cried Walter, explosively, half rising, and looking from one to the other.

"My dear, after your cooking, I expected he would," said Aunt Prue, quietly. "The sample you gave of your powers, this morning, was quite beyond my poor efforts."

Then a bright red flush covered the man's face even to his brow. Were these two women making sport of him? Had he heard aright? In his own opinion he was one of the most acute men alive. That nobody could deceive him had always been a favorite maxim of his.

"I wanted to make the experiment," said Aunt Prue, in the most innocent manner imaginable, "and I find, Walter, that you have been quite spoiled by your wife."

"Bessy! Aunt Prue! why didn't you tell me? Oh, hang it!" And he turned away, too deeply mortified to express himself fittingly.

"Pray, don't mind it," said Aunt Prue. "You know, my dear, I am getting a little old-fashioned."

But Walter has received his lesson. He was too keen not to see that it had been purposely given; and he was man enough to feel profoundly ashamed of himself. Indeed, in time, he confessed as much, and applauded the ingenuity that had so completely taken the ground from under his feet.

Aunt Prue's visit proved so delightful to all parties that she made arrangements to remain with them for an indefinite time; and henceforth Bessy's cares was lightened and she became as in former days, the angel and blessing of home. But she always maintained that she owed something of it, at least, to Aunt Prue's Thanksgiving dinner.

THE skies hung cold and gray;
Among the hills the winds begin to blow;
Herds strike their homeward way
The earth grows white and strange with flying snow.

J. HAZARD HARTZELL.

JOHN HOLLAND'S MERRY CHRISTMAS.

THE day before Christmas every store window was wreathed in green, every rare and beautiful thing exposed to tempt the passer-by was labeled "Christmas Gift." Even the corner groceries and baker shops had green boughs and a generous display of ginger-bread horses and white-sugar hearts enriched with gilt beading, and impossible pink fowls, popularly supposed to be doves. There were myriads of dolls and hundreds of sheds, with names taking in the whole animal kingdom. The streets were crowded with fur-clad smiling women, who were making the last selections of pretty things with which to swell out the fair proportions of many little stockings.

John Holland, leaving his office earlier than usual, made his way slowly through these waves of happy woman-hood, carrying his aching head a little forward, watching with sullen eyes the joy about him, until the tide of bitterness in his heart rose high, and forced from his lips a curse on the morrow that would bring so much happiness to others and so much misery to him. A lonely man was John Holland, over whose dead past stood no monumental marble with name and date thereon—a weary man by his drooping shoulders and uncertain gait—an unhappy man by the wistful look that crept now and then into his sullen eyes. And so in weary, lonely fashion he walked on, leaving the city far behind, and coming at last upon a country road that wound its rough, snow-powdered length through shrubby hollows, and up the hills between leafless gray-barked trees. Now and then a thin sheet of ice cracked beneath his feet—he did not hear it; above his head, close to the soft gray clouds, fat, inky crows sailed round and round, cawing companionably—he did not heed them; while here and there the bare, brown fingers of some shrub or tree held out to him a bunch of scarlet berries, which he did not see. All the grays and browns, touched here and there with green and scarlet, appealed to him in vain. To-morrow was Christmas-Day. He stood alone—he made no one's happiness; therefore to him the world could not be fair. He remembered how, not many years before, he and his wife stole tip-toe through the house, to cram with candies and many wondrous toys the little woolen stockings hanging near the fire. He remembered how the Christmas sunlight, striking through the frosted window pane, turned into burnished gold the ruddy locks of their sturdy baby boy, and now he stumbled up the hill-side, blind with rage and pain. Now two mounds of chill, cold earth held all that made life a dear and precious thing to him. At the top of the hill he paused involuntarily to regain his breath. Up there the wind blew keenly, the ghastly gleam of ice could be seen in the river winding far below. The wood was darkened by many slender pines and stunted hemlock trees—a wintry scene—and Holland thrust his hands deep in his pockets and turned to retrace his steps, when a sound broke the stillness all about him—a sound that set his heart a-throbbing, a sound that drew his feet from the beaten road and sent them striding through the dead brown leaves until they brought him to the very spot where little Ruth sat sobbing.

A strange place to find a child, yet there she sat, flat on the ground, her well-worn, copper-toed shoes stretched out before her, one little hand doubled under her arm, as a bird draws its foot under its wing, the other hand grasped with all its childish might a branch of one of the many small hemlock trees growing about her. So mottled with cold were her face, her hands, and her little bare knees, she might have passed for a figure carved in good old castile soap.

John Holland's sudden appearance did not startle her in the least. She seemed to accept him as one accepts things in dreams, without surprise or fear.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"I'm cold."

How strange the childish voice sounded up there in that chill, bleak place!

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm waiting."

"Poor baby!" thought John Holland, "you are learning the great lesson early. I should like to know the brute who left you sitting here while he or she drinks or gossip in the town below."

"Who are you waiting for, child?"

"The chill, tear stained little face broke into smiles as she whispered:—

"I'm waiting for Santa Claus."

The answer smote him with astonishment. As a boy he had heard much of the genial old man for whom little Ruth was waiting, but he had never heard of his paying a visit or transacting any business in the day-time. So he told her, but she, looking sorrowfully wise, answered:—

"Yes, I know he goes down the chimneys at night, but to-morrow is Christmas, aunty says so, and Santa Claus must come here to-day to get his trees."

"To get his trees?" echoed Holland, sitting down by that bit of childish gravity.

"Why, yes; his trees like this, you know," and after a slow, numb sort of search for something in the depths of her pocket, her cold little hand drew out a leaf of a child's story book, torn and soiled, but bearing on one side a highly colored picture of the good Santa Claus.

"There," she continued eagerly, "see the tree he has on his arm—they don't grow in the city, see, he must come up here to get them."

"I understand; but why wait here in the cold for him when to-night he will come down your chimney with all sorts of pretty toys?"

"But he won't come; he does not know the house is here, he thinks all the boys and girls live down there in the city, so when he comes to get this tree I'm going to say, 'Please, Santa Claus, I live here on the hill. Aunty says I'm pretty good, Can't I have a doll-baby and a picture book?'"

John Holland's voice was very tender when he spoke again to ask her name, and then he lifted her to her feet and said:—

"I'll tell you what we will do, Ruth. You go home before aunty misses you and thinks you are lost, and I'll stay here and watch for Santa Claus."

She shook her head.

"You'll get tired and go away."

"No, I won't, I'll wait until I see him."

"Truly?"

"Truly."

Little Ruth raised her face and Holland kissed her baby mouth.

"Where do you live, child?"

"Only a little ways back in the woods;—there is the path." And running across the dead leaves she struck into a faint, narrow path, and following it disappeared behind the trees. Holland watched her out of sight, then tying his handkerchief to the top branch of that tree which Ruth had selected as the very one Santa Claus most wanted, turned his face cityward and strode down the hill.

Low down in the west, he noticed a long golden rift in the dull gray sky, and it widened and broadened until the golden glory burst its bonds and flooded all the scenes with wintry sunlight. Even so had the childish faith of little Ruth forced its way through clouds of loneliness and grief to fill his heart with sunlight. More than one woman smiled that night at John Holland as he stood in a crowded store examining with supernatural gravity dolls dressed and undressed. A light wagon carried him and his books and toys out from the city and up the woody hill to Ruth's poor home. After peering into the window like an amiable burglar he summoned Ruth's aunt. A few words outside the door, a gentle little laugh, a tear or two, a great rustling of paper, and then the door was closed, and Holland, whistling softly to himself, made his way to the tree from which waved a white handkerchief, and, after much hacking, pulling and digging, succeeded in removing it. Driving home under the starry sky great tears filled his eyes as he thought of "the wife and baby boy gone before," there was no curse on his lips, only a tremulous smile, as he thought of the joyous awakening for little Ruth to-morrow. Next day John Holland gave a dinner; there were four at the table—Holland himself, Ruth, Ruth's aunt, and Ruth's doll Rosey, who ate nothing, but looked lovely and smiled indefatigably. It would be hard to tell how many times Ruth laid her doll on Holland's knee, whereupon her waxy eyelids instantly would close and she fell into a most profound sleep. It would be harder still to tell how eagerly she questioned him as to the exact appearance of Santa Claus when he came for that tree—the very tree she sat beside when she was waiting.

And John Holland telling stories to the little Ruth, hugging her precious Rosey, had indeed a Merry Christmas, for on making the happiness of another he had found his own.

CORSICAN FOLKLORE.

SOMEWHAT more than a hundred miles from the southern coast of France lies the island of Corsica, an island which, for its wild romantic scenery, its wealth of historical associations, and the distinct individuality of its people, is well calculated to awaken the keenest interest of the student, the antiquary, and the traveler. The Cyrnos of the Greeks, the Corsica of the Normans, its possession was often fiercely contested by the great naval powers of ancient times. It has been conquered in turn by the Carthaginians, the Romans, the Saracens, the Genoese, and the French; but through all these varied changes of government, through all the vicissitudes of centuries, the inhabitants have still preserved those peculiarities of manners and customs, and that strange mixture of civilization and semibarbarism, that serve to stamp them as a race apart from the other peoples of the South. In this nineteenth century of progress, when the speculative mind of man refuses credence to much that were established beliefs fifty years ago, it is refreshing to meet with a people who have not yet lost their primitive simplicity.

The Corsicans have an aptitude for learning, but they have a still greater love for liberty; and the protracted struggles they have had to sustain against the enemies who threatened that liberty from without will in some degree help to explain the mental condition of a large proportion of the race. The very character of the country, too—the lofty mountains, the wild and gloomy gorges, the dark monotonous extent of forests—all tend to nurture a host of superstitions, which retain a firm hold upon the minds of the dwellers among them. In the towns and more frequented parts of the island, there is a well defined fringe of civilization, and the visitor to Ajaccio or Bastia may enjoy all the ordinary comforts and luxuries of continental life; but in the more remote districts, where the little hamlets cluster like eagles' eyries on the mountain sides, the natives preserve in all their integrity many of the peculiarities and customs of olden times. The national characteristics of this people are strangely complex; brave, hospitable to strangers, virtuous and intelligent, with a love of freedom and a simplicity of life unspoiled by contact with the outer world—these wholesome traits are yet counterbalanced by an unsatiable thrist for revenge, a ferocity in resenting insult or injury that belong rather to a wholly savage than to a semi-civilized nation. The *vendetta*, which in bygone days made murder not only justiable but righteous, has at times almost depopulated the island; and though now put down by the government with a strong hand, there are still occasional outbreaks of savagery that carry one back to that early period when the philosopher Seneca inveighed in no flattering terms against the barbarians amongst whom he was condemned to spend eight dreary years of banishment.

It is not astonishing that the folklore of such a people is full of interest to the student, and that a rich harvest may be gathered from the national songs and ballads, the quaint tales and curious legends that abound. The wild *voceri*, too, or funera dirges, are often strangely pathetic, and recall in some degree the wailing chants and lamentations of the ancients at the funeral obsequies of their dead. Their is scarcely a male amongst the hardy mountaineers who cannot sing these songs, or relate stories of giants and fairies, of saints or the devil—the latter plays an important part in most Corsican folk tales—or who is not able to rouse the enthusiasm of his attentive audience by narrating some stirring incident of the wars the island has had to sustain against the Saracens or the Genoese, for the memory of these long-past struggles for freedom is ever fresh in the minds of the people.

When the summer days are ended and the vintage is over—when the shepherds have brought down their flocks and herds from the upper pastures of the mountains—when the autumn evenings begin to grow chilly and damp, and it is no longer the season for outdoor amusements—then the villagers are accustomed to gather together in one house rather larger, perhaps, than its neighbors, to pass the hours in friendly intercourse. A huge log burns in the wide open chimney, its fitful flames ever and anon illuminating the dark corners of the room, or throwing strange distorted shadows on the raftered roof; the frugal supper of chestnuts is roast

ing amid the embers; the pitcher of home-made wine circulates freely; and while the young people laugh and jest, the women knit, and the men discuss the result of the day's sport or fishing, the incidents of the last vendetta, or the latest exploits of some well-known brigand.

We can picture the scene; it is like a study of Rembrandt; the circle of eager faces lit up by the ruddy glare of the great log, and in the centre the old man leaning forward, his clasped hands resting on the table, his eyes shut in concentrated thought; silence reigns, except for the clinking of the glasses, the click-click of the women's needles, the crackling of the burning wood, and the occasional "pop" of a chestnut, or the outbursts of merry laughter at some spicy anecdote or well-turned jest.

There is no more laughter-loving being than a Corsican peasant. With him no subject is too sacred to be provocative of mirth; a witty epigram or a good story will often turn aside his anger; and if by chance a priest should come off the worst in it, well, so much the better; for in spite of his superstition, there is a levity and lack of reverence in his composition that leads him to make a scoff of sacred things. Many of these folk-tales, indeed, are more than irreverent, and often border on the profane; others, again, as is not unnatural if we consider the intellectual and social condition of the people, are too coarse for the delectation of ears polite.

In some of the so-called "fairy tales" it is curious to trace a resemblance to much of the familiar nursery lore of our childhood. Cinderella appears—though under another name—and dazzles the prince with her beauty at a ball which he gives on three consecutive nights. She vanishes each night at the same hour by the help of her fairy godmother, leaving not a trace behind, and is only discovered at last through a ring that the prince has given her, and which she kneads into a cake and sends to him by the hands of her waiting-woman. Then, too, we might suppose that the Arabian Night's Entertainment had pentrated into the mountains of Corsica, as we read of the poor peasant Stevanu who discovers the secret of the brigands' treasure-cave in the depths of a vast forest. The magic words "Serchia unclose!" remind us of the "Open Sesame" that brought wealth and prosperity to Ali Baba, and the sequal of the story is no less familiar. The robbers, finding themselves robbed in their turn, seek to discover by means of a ruse the man who has most speedily grown rich in the neighboring village. Disguised as an itinerant dealer in olive oil, their chief drives before him his mules; the foremost of these are laden with great jars filled with oil; but in each of the last six jars a brigand lies concealed. A night's lodging is solicited at the house of Stevanu; the chief has a room assigned to him, and the jars containing his merchandise are left in the kitchen. But Stevanu's suspicions have been aroused by the unusual weight of some of the jars; he guesses the stratagem, and orders his servants to heat a caldron of oil, which he proceeds to pour over the six robbers. Their chief is soon overpowered and killed; and Stevanu is left in undisputed possession of all their ill-gotten gains.

The quaint vein of humor running through some of these popular tales reminds us strongly of old Æsop's Fables. Bastelica is now a fairly prosperous village in Corsica, of some three thousand inhabitants, who would probably one and all resent the imputation that their mental calibre is below the average; yet, for some occult reason, from time immemorial the very name "Il Bastelicacciu" has been held as a synonym for "fools" and shouts of ironical laughter will reward the narrator as he tells the well-known story of the man of Bastelica who once upon a time possessed a wife and a mill. The mill brought him in next to nothing; but the wife—there are perhaps few just like her—thought her good man could do nothing wrong. Said the miller, then, one day: "Let us sell our mill; it hardly earns us bread; while if we only had a cow, she would supply us with fresh milk and butter, and maybe a calf, which we could sell with profit."

"Thou art right as ever," replied his wife; "let us sell the mill."

So the miller sold it for six hundred francs, and with this money he purchased a cow at the neighboring fair, and started merrily on his homeward way. He had not traveled far, however, before he began to feel fatigued.

"I was stupid," thought he, "to buy this cow; some day she may toss me with her horns and kill me; whereas a horse would always be useful. He would carry me on my journeys; and a little grass would suffice for his food."

Just then, a man on horseback passed that way, and an exchange was soon effected. The animal was of no great value, certainly; but for a time the miller rejoiced over his bargain. Then he began to reflect: "A horse will be of little use to me, for I cannot ride all day; assuredly, a goat would serve my purpose better."

A shepherd coming along readily gave the finest goat of his flock for the miller's horse. But Bastelicacciu was not yet satisfied, however; the goat was sold for twenty francs; the twenty francs bought a hen and her brood of chickens; these in their turn were disposed of for a sack of potatoes. But the way was long and the potatoes were heavy; so the miller, in a fit of anger, tumbled sack and all into the nearest stream, and finally reached home empty-handed.

"And the cow, where hast thou put her?" asked his wife.

"Oh, I exchanged her for a good horse; and then, as the horse would not always be useful to us, I chose instead a fine fat goat, that might supply us daily with fresh milk."

To the wife's query, "Where was the goat?" our friend related how the goat was disposed of, how he bought the hen and chickens, how these were replaced by the sack of potatoes, which was finally emptied into the stream.

"Thou hast done wisely," quoth the good woman. "Such a heavy load might perchance have crushed thee by its weight." And so, quite contentedly, the miller and the miller's wife went supperless to bed; and the story-teller adds a moral *a la* Æsopian method: "May every youth one day possess such a treasure of a wife as this; but heaven preserve the maidens from marrying a Bastelicacciu!"

It is not only the nursery tales of our childish days, however, that reappear in these popular *foli* of the Corsican peasantry; many other familiar stories have somehow found their way into the wild mountains and wooded valleys, and are curiously interwoven with threads of local coloring. Shakespeare might be a name unknown to the swarthy herdsman; but tell him the story of King Lear, and of the fatuous decision that brought his life to so pitiful an end, and his dark eyes will flash and his mobile features kindle with interest as he gives you its counterpart from his store of legends, save and expect the tragic sequel of the play. Here, also, he will tell you the king has three children, two daughters and a son. Feeling the approach of old age and infirmities, he summons them before him, and declares his intention of dividing among them his kingdom and all his wealth; but first of all desires to know the measure of their affection. The eldest daughter vows that she loves him more than her life, that for his sake she would renounce her hopes of heaven. The son in his turn declares that his affection for his father outweighs his desire to reign in his place, that to please such a parent he would throw himself, if need be, into a fiery furnace. Then comes the old king's youngest daughter, his favorite child, and, like Cordelia, she makes no extravagant protestations, but modestly says that she loves him as a dutiful and affectionate daughter ought to love so kind a father. This reply enrages the infatuated king, and he orders her out of his sight. Marie wanders away in the disguise of a shepherdess, and meets with many wonderful adventures before the inevitable prince comes to her rescue; but she steadfastly refuses him unless her father can be present at the ceremony. Meanwhile, however, the poor old king has been so cruelly ill-treated by his unnatural children that he has lost his reason; and it is only after many months of tender care and loving attention that Marie's devotion is rewarded, and the king regains his throne. Then the wicked son and daughter are punished as they deserve; Cordelia's prototype is married, and everybody lies happily ever after.

We have spoken hitherto of the popular folktales, or of those in which may be traced a resemblance to stories familiar to us from our childhood. If we turn now to the class of legends properly so called, we shall see how deep a vein of superstition runs through the nature of the true-bore Corsican. Not even the superstitous Irish peasant can have a firmer belief in the "good people" whom he sees dancing in the pale moonlight by the edge of a lonely bog, or beneath the green shade of the forest trees, than has the hardy mountaineer of this wild, half-civilized island in the fairies supposed to haunt some gloomy grotto or rocky cave. It may be by the side of a little mountain lake, half hidden by the overhanging cliff, or in the dim recesses of some wild forest but rarely trodden by the foot of man, that the fairy has made her home; it matters little; but her presence there is as certain, her personality

as real to the credulous villagers, as were even the dryads and nymphs of old to the cultured imaginative Greeks and Romans. From time to time she appears in human form to some favored mortal; but vanishes out of sight if he dare venture on too familiar an approach.

How much or little of these wild fancies may have owed their origin to the myths of ancient Rome would now be impossible to determine; but it is curious to trace in some few lingering superstitions a vague resemblance to certain rites and ceremonies that were familiar to the Romans from earliest times, and which would doubtless have been introduced by them into the lands they conquered. When Corsica became a Roman province, heathen temples were erected here and there, in which the augurs were wont to propitiate the gods by sacrifices, or foretell future events through such mystic signs as the flight of birds and the entrails of beasts.

Omens and portents are firmly believed in, and probably nowhere are ghosts treated with such respect as in Corsica. Many a stalwart peasant who would not flinch before the onslaught of an enemy, who is brave in battle, untiring in the chase, will shrink and tremble in abject terror if compelled to traverse a burial-ground at dead of night. Should a sudden death occur in the village, there will not be wanting those who will tell you with sacred looks and bated breath that they at least were prepared to hear the sad tidings, for did not the *malucella*—a bird of evil omen, somewhat resembling the banshee of Irish folk-tales—utter its wailing cry three nights in succession over the roof of the dead man's house, and was not the sound of a muffled drum beaten by invisible hands upon its doorstep? In this class there is one specially grim superstition which relates to he Squadra d'Arrozza (the Brotherhood of the Dead). It is supposed to consist of those whose earthly career was ended long ago, but who still retain a semblance of the duties they were once called upon to perform. Before the death of some exalted personage, just at the midnight hour they sweep, a ghostly train, through the silent streets, each phantom form concealed beneath a monkish cloak and cowl, and bearing lighted tapers in their hands. Not a sound is heard as this gruesome mockery of a funeral possession passes by, but woe betide the unfortunate individual who may chance to cross its path; let him beware lest the spectres surround him unawares; in such a case he is surely lost, but if he preserve his presence of mind and keep a firm front, they will disappear at earliest cockcrow, and thus he may know the warning is not meant for him.

We might easily multiply these instances of strange credulity, and quote many more of the quaint superstitions, that, handed down as they are by word of mouth from father to son, have grown into the very hearts of the people; but enough has been told to show how far behind his contemporaries the Corsican peasant still is in the scale of civilization. After all, is he on that account an object of unmixed pity? Surely not. When we think how slight an impression the "education of the masses" can ever make upon the squalid misery that thronga the courts and alleys of our great cities, we may be content to leave to the simple-hearted mountaineer his myths and fancies, since they are nurtured by the very conditions of the untrammelled life he leads amidst the wild scenery and beneath the blue cloudless skies of his beautiful island home.

BETTER NOT.

TIME is flying, and the closing of the year
Draweth near;
Let us wheel an easy-chair before the fire,
And inquire
How the balance of Life's Ledger will come out,
Half in doubt,
If the story of our trading will be bad,
Gay, or sad.

See the turning of the crowded pages shows
Folios
What our fingers long to wrench away and tare
Did we dare;
But the figures that are written must remain,
Loss or gain.
Bah! the Ledger is as heavy as a "Krupp."
Shut it up!

A TANGLED SKEIN.

By Carrie D. Beebe.

IN the State of New York there are a few thinly populated counties, which are nearly covered with dense forests of hemlock. The trees are of but little value for timber, but their bark is extensively used for tanning purposes. And, it being easier for Mohammed to come to the mountain than for the mountain to go to Mohammed, quantities of hides are imported from South America, and other countries where wild cattle are abundant, and taken to these forests to be made into leather. Extensive tanneries are built, with little villages of laborers' houses about them; and a short distance from these may usually be seen an imposing mansion, the residence of the owner of the tannery. The proprietors of these tanneries are necessarily men of wealth, and they have an absolute control over their laborers, as the land-holders of England exert over their tenants.

Lucy Drumgold sat in the drawing-room, with a basket containing numerous balls of bright-hued wools beside her; her slender pink-tipped fingers dilligently engaged in stitching the pattern of an elaborate bouquet of roses and lilies into a piece of soft-colored velvet, designed for a chair-cushion. Her father was the owner of one of these tanneries of which I have been telling, and a man of influence in his county. His tannery and its surroundings were known as the village of Beech River, and it was situated in a picturesque valley with the loveliest of wild scenery about it.

Lucy was not the only occupant of the room. Her brother Rob was lounging upon a sofa, otensibly reading a book,, but in reality watching with eager restless eyes a still slender figure at the opposite end of the long room. All unconscious of his gaze, Celeste Halbert stood at the oriel-window, her face turned away. With her outward eyes she saw to the right the tannery, a long dark building, and clustered about it the low wood-colored houses. Before her was the lawn, partially shaded with its firs and beeches, and gay with flowerbeds, arranged in graceful shapes. Beyond it swept Beech River, a bright silver stream. To the left was a mountain covered with dark hemlock, the cloud-shadows floating over it; and above and around all was golden sunshine, a blue sky and a perfect June day.

But Celeste saw none of this. Her great brown eyes looked straight before her, beyond the brightness of the summer day, into the gloom of her future life. Over her mental vision dawned a drear November sky, and a pall of winter wind and sleet seemed to dampen and chill her spirits and weigh them down. She was Lucy's schoolmate and dearest friend, both having graduated but a few days before. She had come home with Lucy to spend the summer, and for the future there was all manner of delights in store for her, for she was a beauty, a belle and an heiress. But now! Only twelve hours before she had received the announcement that her future had been suddenly swept away by the speculation of an unjust guardian, and she had only two slender hands between her and future want. And they were such helpless hands! Lucy, delightfully impractical, since she had never known the want or value of money, had arranged it in her own mind and generous heart, that Celeste should spend the remainder of her days at Beech River; but Celeste knew this could not be.

At this moment, Lucy paused in her work, and drawing a skein of delicate pink wool from the basket beside her, she slipped it over the back of a low chair and began to wind. But the skein knotted and tangled provokingly, and as her patience was so seldom tried, she had but a small stock on hand for use.

"O Celeste!" she called, in a voice that resembled a grieved wood-robin's, "O Celeste! what shall I ever do? The only skein of the shade this side of the city, and just see how tangled it is! My rose will be quiet spoiled without it."

Celeste turned slowly from the window, and took the skein from Lucy's impatient hands. There were tears of vexation in Lucy's childish blue eyes, but Celeste's were hard and dry.

"Perhaps I can wind it, dear," she said.

With a little murmur of profuse thanks, Lucy subsided into the depths of her easy-chair, while Celeste patiently undid the

knot and wound the skein. Rob, still silent over his book watched the two girls. Lucy was a delicate blonde, as dainty as a white lily; but Celeste was a very vision of beauty. An oval face with a pale creamy complexion, brown dreamy eyes, arched brows, smooth forehead and rich scarlet lips; and all framed in abundant braids and bands of jet black hair. A form slender but beautifully moulded, willowy and quietly graceful; a through-bred patrician air about all she did or said, a voice like a siren's, and a smile and glance like sunlight.

Rob had a blonde complexion, and hair like his sister's but, unlike her, he was tall, strong and muscular. He was a young man of fine mind and noble generous impulses, and on this particular morning a struggle was going on in his heart. He was only twenty-one, his collegiate education unfinished. He knew his father had a course of travel mapped out for him as soon as he left college; and knew, too, that he expected great things of him and his future, for he was an only son. But he loved that sweet woman who, with a face paler than usual on account of her recent trouble, patiently bent over her task, and he wanted her for his own.

There was a slow firm step in the hall, and Mr. Drumgold paused a moment at the open door.

"Robert," he said, "I wish to see you for a few moments in the library."

Rob rose dutifully, and followed the footsteps into the library. When both were seated, Mr. Drumgold began:—

"Robert, there are turning-points in every young man's life, and I believe you have reached one now."

"How so, father?" Rob asked, quietly, but with a foreboding in his heart as to what was to come.

"You are in love with Celeste Halbert?" he replied.

Rob started to his feet.

"My son," resumed Mr. Drumgold, testily, "I beg you will not annoy me with such abruptness of manner. It is not necessary for you to confess it, for every member of the household is aware of it. Of course, I don't blame you in the least. The girl is beautiful enough to lure any impulsive young man like yourself to his ruin."

"Father," trying to keep down his anger, "it is strange you never thought it necessary to warn me before."

"No heroics, Robert, if you please. I dislike them, exceedingly. Heretofore there has been no warning needed. I knew you were in love with the girl, but I was sure you had no idea of immediate marriage. She has been unfortunate in losing her property, and, as she has no near relatives to care for or support her, it is not unnatural for you to wish to do both. No doubt you are quite ready to die for her, or do any other impossible thing. Now, I do not wish to discuss the subject at all; I have a command and suggestion to make, and then you may go. I forbid your marrying before you are twenty-five years of age. And I think it better for all of us to have Miss Celeste leave the house within a week."

For a moment Robert stood regarding his father attentively. There was no pity in the old man's gray eyes, not a relenting curve in the thin firm lips.

"Father," he said at last, "have you anything to say against Celeste?"

"Nothing," Mr. Drumgold answered sharply, "except that she is a woman, and a beautiful one, too. And if I had my own way, you should not speak to a woman in the next five years."

Robert turned and walked slowly away. Meantime, Celeste had finished the skein, and tossing the ball into Lucy's lap, she turned again to the oriel-window.

"You're such a darling," purred Lucy, in a kittenish way. "I never could have any patience with a tangled skein. And this one ran very smoothly at first, and then suddenly resolved itself into one grand snarl."

"It is like my life," answered Celeste, with a little desolate shiver. "It ran so smoothly for a time, but now it is one grand tangle. I wonder if it will be always so?" drearily.

"No," chirped Lucy, as she rose to leave the room. "I predict," eagerly, "some pretty little romance for you, ending in sunshine as all proper romances do."

She ran up to her room, and while her footsteps were still upon the staircase, Rob entered the drawing-room. As he approached Celeste, he took in with one glance her wonderful beauty and the harmony of her attire. A black dress, thin, airy and trailing, coral fastening the lace at her throat, and coral in her dark hair; all was in perfect keeping. Reason told him it would

be best for him to give her up altogether; but his heart cried out, "She must be mine!"

She turned as he drew near, and the sorrowful look in her face was too much for him to bear. It was such a fair, fair face! with a brooding desolate look upon it; such a sweet womanly face! and the dearest in the world to him. He took it in his hands, and kissed the red grieved lips and the white drooping eyelids.

"Darling!" he whispered, softly. And then the face, aflame with a bright rose tint, was lost to mortal ken for a moment; as he had her in his arms.

"O Rob!" choking a sob in her throat. That was all; but it revealed to him all the trouble and grief in her lonely heart more eloquently than any lengthy address could have done.

He opened his lips to speak, but what could he tell her? What can any man who loves a woman say to her but the truth? So he told her all—his love, his father's commands.

"But you are all the world to me," he said, in conclusion.

She interrupted him.

"No, not all the world, Rob, or you would not hesitate a moment; still, I am satisfied if I am the larger half of it, as your truthfulness has proved to me."

"But I am going to do exactly as you say, darling," he replied.

"Do you think I would be a millstone about your neck?" she asked.

"You could never be that, Celeste."

"I could, but I never will."

"You do not mean that I must give you up, darling? I would renounce the whole world first."

"You are to give up nothing," she answered.

"Celeste, do you love me?"

"I will wait for you," she said.

A few weeks thereafter Celeste was upon the ocean, bound for Havana. Thanks to her knowledge of Spanish, she had been engaged as governess to the daughter of a wealthy Cuban planter, a widower, whose wife had been an American. Her sister middle-aged, and ugly both in form and feature, engaged Celeste; and, with the child, Viola, accompanied her on the voyage from New York. The weather was soft and mild, and the first evening out Celeste sat upon deck, almost happy when she reflected that she was taking care of herself while waiting for Rob. There was only starlight, and as they moved along seeming to swing lazily in midair, with the sky above and below them, Celeste twirled the diamond upon her finger thoughtfully, for it was Rob's last gift to her. A sudden movement of the vessel, how or why she could never tell, for the sea was smooth, and the ring slipped from her slender third-finger, and was lost in the water below. An almost irresistible impulse to plunge into the water and follow it came over her, but she shook it off, and going below, she crept into bed and sobbed herself to sleep.

From the first Viola seemed an interesting child. She was accustomed to travel, and so was not shy, yet she was not overbold. She spoke English with a pure accent, but her aunt usually conversed in Spanish. She was a short dark woman, with a forbidding expression of countenance, and as she was always bewailing her lot, her name Dolorite, suited her well. Her dress, a shabby and faded silk, she wore both night and day; but her fat fingers were covered with costly diamonds that glittered as unpleasantly upon Celeste's sight, as did the owner's weird eyes.

They passed stormy Hatteras, and, shooting out to avoid the Gulf Stream, soon reached the crystal sea around the Bahamas; with the deep blue of the tropical skies above them, and the white coral reefs below. All this was new to Celeste, and she would have enjoyed it throughly only for the loss of her ring. This preyed upon her mind, in spite of all her efforts to overcome it. When they reached Havana, and anchored in the bay, little Viola looked anxiously about in the little sailboats which came to convey the passengers on shore, for her father, one hand closely clasping Celeste's meanwhile.

"I want to introduce you to my papa," she said, "because I love you."

Then turning to look again, she gave a little scream of delight, and threw herself into the arms of a gentleman whom she announced to Celeste as her father, Senor Pedro Laramello. He was a handsome man; or would have been, only there seemed something in his bright black eyes so very like his sister's. A sinister expression; but it was not there always, and never when he looked upon his child.

The custom-house safely passed, they

entered two separate volantes, and rode to the railway depot; for Senor Laramello resided upon his plantation, which was situated a few miles distant from Havana.

Celeste gazed upon the country about her, wondering if she had not by some chance been spirited into Central Asia, everything was so strange. Havana, with its many colored houses, had appeared singular enough but the country, with its stately palms, some standing singly, some in colonnades; its cocoa trees, bending like an aged man under the weight of years; its few squalid houses, with here and there the ruin of some ancient wall or dwelling, looked very dreary, very unlike anything she could ever call home.

When the house was reached, Celeste begged to be shown at once to her room. It was cool and comfortable with its marble floor, its cane-seated chairs and lounges, the doors reaching but half way to the ceiling to allow a free circulation of air. The building like all Cuban houses, was low and rambling. But it was elegantly furnished, and willing slaves were always ready to do the slightest bidding of Celeste.

She received one letter from Rob, one manly precious letter, and then she heard from him no more. She wrote him, once, twice, thrice, but no answer came. Day by day, she watched and waited, her desolate heart filled with sad forebodings, but her watching was in vain. She grew thinner, paler; her form was languid, and her smiles were shadowy when they came at all. She devoted herself assiduously to little Viola, winning the love and trust of the child. One day, while teaching her embroidery, she came to a skein of knotted silk.

"It is worthless," she said to a servant, "take it away." Then more quietly to herself, "I cannot bear a tangled skein."

Meanwhile the house was gay with invited guests. Sumptuous entertainments were given by Senor Pedro and his sister; balls, fetes, and brilliant banquets followed in quick succession. Celeste avoided these at first, but gradually, at the urgent solicitation of Senor Laramello, she joined the revellers. She was a fine pianist, and possessed a sweet clear voice, and soon became the life of these entertainments.

Still she received no tidings from Rob. Even Lucy had forgotten her, for, after the first month of her stay in Cuba, she had no letter from home. Their letters could not have been miscarried, she argued with herself, for the first ones came in safely. Lucy had ceased to care for her, Robert was untrue.

One day when there was little company, and it was growing towards evening so they could venture out in the sun, Celeste accompanied Senor Pedro out to view the sugar mills, and watch the slaves as they gathered the coffee-berries and spread them out to dry upon the long platform prepared for them. The senor spoke tolerable English, and as he conversed with Celeste in a low voice, something in his look and tone struck her suddenly—was it a pang or a thrill of joy? He loved her— she was very sure. Then she remembered that though she had been a member of his household for more than a year, though she had been far from friends, and completely in this man's power, he had never been unpleasantly familiar, had never caused her to feel her dependence in any way. Yet he was ever thoughtful of her comfort. She was too warm, and the volante was immediately drawn into the shade. She was thirsty, a glass of wine was at once forthcoming, brought by a slave at her master's bidding, together with a pomegranate ripe and fair. She paled suddenly as these things dawned upon her mind. Was the senorita weary? If so they would return. No, she was not weary, she told him, and then she sighed.

"The senorita is sad, then," he persisted. "She is grieving for the friends she has left behind."

She looked up into his eyes. There was only tenderness in them now, and it made his whole face beautiful. She trembled; was it with fear or pain?

"I am sad," she answered, desolately, and she looked far away to where a white ship was coming over the sea. Then she turned and looked him full in the face with her sad beautiful eyes. "But it is because I have no friends. They do not care for me, though I thought that they loved me once."

Senor Pedro's face lighted with sudden passion.

"Do not say you have no friends!" he said. "I love and adore you, my pale, pale northern flower! Be my wife, and I will be more to you than all your false friends could be, were they ever so true!"

He caught her hand and pressed it to his lips. She glanced toward the sea, but a mist came over her eyes, and the bright tropical

flowers near the roadside seemed to blend like the hues of a rainbow, and shut everything else from her sight.

"Promise me!" he exclaimed, eagerly, "promise me!" And he bent low to look into her face.

But her thoughts wandered to the past, and the sad memory-bells chimed, softly, "I will wait for you." Faint at heart she answered him:—

"I cannot tell you now; I am weary, ill. Please take me home!"

"To-night then," he pleaded; "answer me to-night."

"To-night," she echoed; and with another kiss, he turned to conduct her to the house.

When she reached it she threw herself upon a couch, wishing she might never rise again. Then for two long hours she struggled with her sorrow, alone. A servant entered the room noiselessly, and brought upon a silver salver rich fruits; oranges and bananas, with a cluster of orange blooms in the centre. She knew whose watchful care had sent them, and she kissed the floral offering, solemnly resolving to reward his love. Dressing her hair, she carefully arrayed herself in a rich dress of mingled black and white lace, and drew the orange blossoms through her dark braids.

Again the servant entered, this time with a casket and a note from Senor Pedro. If her answer was yes, she was to wear the enclosed jewels, and meet him near the orange-grove before the house, in half an hour. She opened the casket, and taking from it rarer diamonds than she had ever seen before, she placed them on her graceful neck and white rounded arms. Then, when the half hour struck she rose, and, whiter than the orange-blossoms, she went out to where Senor Pedro with a few guests near him, paced slowly backward and forward through the grove. With the first gleam of her dress in the doorway he turned to meet her. He put out his hands, and stooping, kissed her tenderly. Then, drawing her hand within his arm, he announced her to his friends as his future bride. Celeste felt his protecting arms; she heard the congratulations of the guests; the breathe of the orange-grove was sweet, and the whole scene was fair to the eye. What more could she ask?

Two years passed by, and the scourge of yellow fever swept the island, leaving many homes desolate. At the villa of Senor Pedro, Viola was the first victim. Her father, dying a few hours after, was buried in the same grave with her. Dolorite and Celeste were both attacked with the disease, but slowly recovered.

One day Celeste was examining some of her husband's private papers, and she came to a large envelop addressed to herself. Slightly surprised, she opened it. A bitter cry burst from her lips when she broke the seal and saw the contents. There were ten letters—she counted them eagerly—from Robert, bearing different dates, and directed to Celeste Halbert, in Senor Pedro's care. They had all come before her marriage, and were filled with entreaties and loving words. The last one bade her farewell; saying he had received a letter from Dolorite announcing her approaching wedding. Senor Pedro had withheld them from her, assisted, no doubt, by Dolorite. There was no words of explanation. Pedro was dead. He had loved her; she would not speak of it to Dolorite.

But she made all haste to return to New York. There was nothing to detain her now. She had been for months a widow, and the wealth she had once inherited from her father was a mere pittance compared with that she received now. She would go at once and tell the truth to Rob, even though he might be married, and care nothing for her now. Upon reaching New York, she set out at once for Beech River. The village was not situated on the railroad, it was twelve miles from the nearest station. While waiting here for the carriage to take her to Mr. Drumgold's, Celeste made some inquiries concerning him of the woman in waiting.

"Dear me!" was the answer. "Why you couldn't have been here lately, ma'am. Mr. Drumgold drank himself to death months ago, and left things in a dreadful state, for the firm failed a few weeks since. Even the men's wages are not paid, and they are all in fearful want. Young Mr. Drumgold hasn't the credit to get him a barrel of flour, even, and the tannery families have lived on potatoes for two weeks. If it had been the old gentleman, the house would have been burned over his head before this. As it is, the tannery has been fired twice, but Mr. Drumgold was on the watch, and he got the men to put it out. I wonder he don't leave, but the house is to pass into creditors' hands, and he is waiting

for it to be settled. It's not much of a place to visit at this time, ma'am."

Celeste turned away. The carriage was waiting! "I wish to go to some flour and provision store," she said to the driver, as she entered it. They were soon reached, and Celeste purchesed large quantities at each; ordering them sent to Beech River at once.

When they came to the village, she glanced out and found the buildings were little changed since she saw them, years ago. But the tannery was closed, and men in little knots of two and three each, were gathered together here and there, a dark almost desperate look on their faces. There was a little store where Mr. Drumgold had dealt out the necessaries of life to those men, but it was closed. Celeste halted as she drew near.

"Who has the key to this store?" she asked.

"God help us!" exclaimed one of the men. "It matters little to us. But I believe Mike has it, ma'am."

"I have it," answered the man designated as Mike. "But sorry a thing to ate is there in it, ma'am."

"No matter. You are to open it, for there are flour and provisions on the way, Put them in their places when they come; these men will help you. Now," to the men who were crowding about the carriage, "have you anything to show what is due you for your labor?"

A score of dirty slips of paper were handed to her at once; due-bills, all bearing Rob's name.

"These shall all be redeemed," she said, her lips moving unsteadily. "And you are to get what ever you wish to eat from the store, besides."

Some looked incredulous, some cried "God bless you!" and others seemed moody still. Celeste opened her purse, and took from it a handful of small gold coins. "You are to pay these men for helping you," she said to Mike, and she dropped the gold in his hand.

Gold! and they were starving! A loud shout rent the air. Hats were tossed above their owners' heads and unsteady voices called down blessings from heaven on their deliverer. She waved her hand, and rode away.

The door was open, she did not stop to ring. She glanced through the long drawing-room; the one she sought was not there. She passed on to the library. A young man sat before the centre-table, his head bowed upon it. His left hand hung by his side, his right grasped something which glittered in the light which came from the window. It was a revolver.

"O Rob!" Celeste called quickly, fearing it was to late.

He raised his head and disclosed a pale despairing face.

"O Rob!" and the tears rained down her cheeks. "I never received your letters, dear, they were kept from me; as I suppose mine were from you. I am a widow now. And, oh, my darling! I have loved you all the time!"

It was long before he could understand her—long before he could believe the blessed truth. But that evening, just before sunset, when there was not a hungry soul in Beech River, the laborers were bidden to the lawn in front of the mansion, and there before them all Rob and Celeste were married.

The tannery passed into other hands; and when Rob's affairs were settled satisfactorily, he and Celeste bade adieu to Beech River, and went to seek another home in the old world "over the sea."

NEW-YEARS EVE.

SILENT we stand 'neath the wintry sky;
The minutes are going fast;
When out on the midnight air there rings
The sound of the bells at last;
Clashing and chiming the old year out,
As we stand at the New-Year's door,
Waiting with half-reluctant steps
To cross its threshold o'er.

OUR YOUNG FOLKS' STORY-TELLER.

WHAT BECAME OF THE REINDEER.

By Elizabeth Bigelow.

SANTA CLAUS had a way of bringing useful things to Derry Trimmer's house. Derry usually found a pair of warm mittens, and a worsted muffler, and perhaps a pair of new shoes, in his stocking on Christmas morning. The other children had oranges, nuts and candy, in their stockings, beside useful things; but Derry was getting to be a big boy, almost thirteen, and Santa Claus seemed to think he must have outgrown his sweet-tooth.

As good and wise as Santa Claus is, he does seem to make mistakes, sometimes.

The Trimmers were rather poor people; Derry's father was a blacksmith, and he had a good many children to support, and I suppose Santa Claus thought there might not always be new shoes and mittens and mufflers enough to go round. But it is a little discouraging never to have anything but useful things.

Derry didn't care much about getting up to see what there was in his stocking; he felt so sure there would be a pair of the same kind of mittens, that he knew so well; they looked much as if they were made of grandma's old blue yarn, that Derry shrewdly suspected she and Santa Claus had put their heads together; and the same red and blue muffler that he had just worn out! It did seem as if that muffler was restored by magic every year. And a pair of stout shoes; he didn't want to be ungrateful, but he would like to tell Santa Claus, that a fellow got awfully tired of one kind of shoes, and that it was a great pity that he always traded at Burke's, the other store was so much better. It was rather queer that he always brought his presents in Cedarville, since he was such a traveler. Derry would have liked something that came from the city.

He was just deciding that he would rather have another nap than to see the mittens and the muffler and the thick shoes, when he heard his brothers and sisters shouting, "Oh, look at Derry's splendid present! How did Santa Claus know just exactly what he wanted? O Derry! come and see!"

There never was all that outcry for mittens and thick shoes and mufflers, Derry knew that very well, for the Trimmers were a unit in their opinion of Santa Claus' want of taste in that particular, and he slipped into his clothes in a trice, and rushed to the sitting-room fireplace where the stockings were hung.

His first glance filled him with disappointment. There was a blue-yarn mitten hanging out at each side of the stocking, and the muffler trailing down to the floor. But another look showed him, leaning against the mantelpiece, a sled! Such a sled as never had been seen in Cedarville before. Derry understood sleds. He knew the moment he looked at that one that it would go. Long and slender, with runners that were like slender rods of steel; not much ornament about it,—Derry scorned that as only fit for a girl's sled—but a plain coat of red paint, with narrow black lines, and the name Reindeer in black letters upon the side; if that sled was not a beauty, Derry would like to see one that was!

Somebody who knew something must have put that idea into Santa Claus' head. Just the very thing he had been longing for, too, for he had only a queer-looking little old sled, that he had made himself, that had no go in it to speak of.

Each one of the children had something new and wonderful to show that Santa Claus had brought. Little Jonathan, who was five, actually had a box out of which a mouse hopped into one's face when one lifted the lid. Such useless and delightful presents as that had never been seen in the Trimmer household before. Somebody besides grandma had jogged his elbow. Derry thought of Uncle Peter. It didn't seem exactly like him, but then who could it have been? Uncle Peter was their mother's uncle, who lived far away off in a great city, and was rich and eccentric. He lived all alone and was very unsocial. It was said that he had once been open-hearted and genial, but a friend had deceived him, and destroyed his faith in humanity. Derry hoped that nothing would happen to him to destroy his faith in humanity, and make him such a crusty old curmudgeon as Uncle Peter. He came to visit them at rare intervals, but he hardly said a civil word to

anybody, and he never gave them anything, not even useful things. And he watched the children, continually, with his little, keen, black eyes, that seemed to look through and through and through one. Derry had his own private opinion that Uncle Peter was a witch; how else did he know about the fight he had with Jimmy Bumstead because Jimmy tormented little Perley Grout? Or how he went fishing and didn't get home in time for school? He was in his own home, miles and miles away but when he came to Cedarville, six months afterware, he knew all about it. There was something queer about Uncle Peter.

Derry knew something about him that nobody else in the family did; he once gave the Widow Crewe a barrel of flour, and Billy Orcutt a jack-knife. Billy was a cripple and could not lift himself from his chair, and the Widow Crewe was very poor, but it did seem to Derry the very queerest thing he ever heard of for Uncle Peter to be giving them presents. It wouldn't have seemed much queerer, he thought, if the iron dragon on the town pump had betaken himself to distributing doughnuts and molasses candy!

Uncle Peter discovered that he knew of his kind deeds and roughly ordered him not to tell any one. And Derry had not dreamed of disobeying. He knew that Uncle Peter would find it out if he did, and crunch his bones, like the wicked giant in a fairy book.

Knowing of these deeds of Uncle Peter's made him think it possible that he had advised Santa Claus to bring the sled and the toys, but he did not breathe his suspicions to anybody; he hardly dared to breathe at all lest Uncle Peter should find out that he had had the suspicions.

The Reindeer was just what a sled ought to be, whoever sent it, and there was not a prouder boy than Derry in Cedarville. Of course there wasn't snow enough for coasting for almost a month; and it seemed as if things always did happen like that to Derry. But at last, on one Monday, there came a heavy snow-storm, and by Wednesday afternoon Squirrel Hill was in a fine condition for coasting.

Squirrel Hill was a famous place for coasting, and not only were all the boys in Cedarville there, on that Wednesday afternoon, but boys from the adjoining villages. There were all kinds of sleds, double-runners and single, pointers and cradles, home-made sleds guiltless of paint, and, in one or two cases, even guiltless of runners, and all sleds made in the highest style of art and resplendent with gay colors and gilding; but there was not one there that could beat the Reindeer!

It distanced them every time, and Derry found himself the hero of the hour. The Cedarville boys were all delighted because it could beat any sled that the Lincolnville boys had, for the Lincolnville boys were inclined to put on airs and to plume themselves upon being superior in every way to Cedarville boys.

Sydney Burrill, whose father was the richest man in Lincolnville, took Derry aside and offered him two dollars for his sled.

"Pooh! you have to give about as much as that for a common sled," said Derry, scornfully.

"My cousin in Boston has got one that will beat it all to hollow! But I'll give you two and a half for it."

"I should just like to see your cousin's in Boston! It must have a streak of chain-lighting hitched to it, if it can go faster than this!" said Derry with some warmth in his tone.

"I'll give you three dollars for it, cash; have it in my pocket," said Sidney Burrill.

"When I want to sell it I'll let you know!" said Derry, walking off. Of course he was thinking that time would never come and so was Sidney Burrill. But one can never tell what is going to happen next.

Derry went over the fence into the field, where three or four boys had gone to try coasting on the crust.

The field was better than the road; there was a delightful "jounce about midway of the descent, that sent one flying, and almost took away one's breath. The Riendeer was not contented to stop at the foot of the hill; it went half-way up another one. On the third trip the idea suddenly struck Derry that it would be a fine thing to turn his sled, just below the "jounce," and see if it wouldn't go across the field, down a long gentle slope, and across Rattling-Brook bridge. There was not much of a descent until just before the bridge was reached, but the Reindeer received an impetus from the "jounce," and he thought it might be done. And the Reindeer did it, while all the boys shouted. It went across the Rattling-Brook bridge, and away down into old Granny

Nesmith's dooryard. Granny Nesmith was a very queer and cross old woman, who gathered roots and herbs and sold them for her living in the summer, and told fortunes in the winter, to the few people who were foolish to believe in her. She was very cross indeed; if a boy went within sight or hearing of her house, she always came out to the door and scolded him and shrieked to him to go away. In justice to Granny Nesmith it might be said, that some very bad boys had been in the habit of playing tricks on her, and annoying her in various ways, so perhaps she was not so much to blame for regarding all boys with suspicion.

She lived nearly a mile away from any other habitation, and her house was a tumbled-down and comfortless little place. It looked very dreary, on this day, for the snow was drifted high around it, and not a path was shoveled out. Derry expected that Granny Nesmith would appear in the doorway and order him off her premises, but Granny Nesmith was neither to be seen nor heard. There was no smoke from the chimney, no signs of life about the place. He wondered if she could have moved away without his hearing of it. He remembered to have heard his mother say, only a day or two before, that she hoped that Granny Nesmith had not wanted for anything through the cold weather, and that some ladies of the Benevolent Society would have gone to see her if they had dared, but Granny Nesmith was very angry at anything she considered an intrusion, and they had not ventured.

Derry summoned up all his courage, and went and peeped in at the window.

On the miserable bed in the corner of the room lay what he at first thought was Granny Nesmith's dead body. Her eyes were closed, and her face looked white and pinched; even her lips were white, and her cheeks had great hollows in them. Derry was awe-stricken and very much inclinded to run away. But, suddenly, Granny Nesmith opened her eyes, and saw Derry's face pressed against the window-pane. She half raised herself with a cry, and beckoned to Derry with her trembling forefinger.

Derry didn't want to go in. He knew a boy who said Granny Nesmith could turn you into a mouse, and let her cat eat you up. Of course he didn't believe that,—he was too sensible a boy; but he didn't feel any strong desire to increase his acquaintance with Granny Nesmith. However, it was evident that she was ill and needed help, and Derry hesitated only a moment.

"You are Derrick Trimmer, a'n't you?" said Granny Nesmith, staring at him with her great, hollow, black eyes. "I thought it was an angel."

Derry blushed; he found it quite embarrassing to be taken for an angel.

"I don't want people starin' round and pryin' into my affairs!" said Granny Nesmith suddenly, in a fierce tone, and raising herself in the bed.

Derry was sure that if there was one thing in the world that he didn't want to do it was to pry into Granny Nesmith's affairs, and if she had beckoned him in on the supposition that he was an angel he thought he might as well go.

But Granny Nesmith called after him as he turned toward the door.

"Don't go away! don't go away! I want to tell you something. You won't tell anybody in the world if I tell you something, will you?"

Derry shook his head decidedly. He could keep a secret, all the boys knew that, and he was somewhat proud of it.

"I want something to eat! I'm terrible hungry. But I don't want people to come here meddling with me, and saying I ought to go to the poor-house. You won't tell a living soul, will you? I'm starving! I haven't had anything to eat for three days. Can't you get me something without letting anybody know?—a little tea! If I had a cup of tea I should be as good as new. And some potatoes, and a little flour, and may be a very little piece of meat, I haven't tasted a bit for weeks; just enough food to keep me for two or three weeks, and then my nephew out West is going to send me some money. Can't you do it without letting anybody know?"

"I'll try; but sha'n't I send the doctor to you?" said Derrick courageously.

"No! no! don't you do it!" cried Granny Nesmith. "Doctors are of no use. It is only food that I want. Won't you get it quick?"

"Yes, just as soon as I can," said Derrick, and wen..

There was only one way for him to get food without telling anybody for whom he wanted it; that thought had flashed across Derry's mind as soon as Granny Nesmith asked him. He did not hesitate about tak-

ing that way, but, oh! how much heavier-hearted he was as he climbed that hill than when he had come swooping and bounding merrily down upon the Reindeer. What a sled that Reindeer was! He didn't dare to trust himself to look at it. He drew Sydney Burrill out the sight and hearing of the other boys.

"Do you want to buy it now for three dollars?" said he.

"Well, I said I would, and I will," said Sydney, endeavoring to assume a business-like indifference.

"Will you paint over the name, and never let anybody know that I sold it to you? The Cedarville fellows would be down on me, you know, and there's another reason why I don't want anybody to know."

"The go is all I care about. I would just as soon give it some other name," said Sydney, and immediately took three new and crisp one-dollar bills out of his pocket and gave them to Derry.

With a great sigh that came from the very bottom of his heart, Derry put the rope of the Reindeer into Sydney's hand.

There was a store at the Four Corners, only a little more than half a mile away, and Derry ran as fast as he could go, remembering Granny Nesmith's pinched face, and the tone of distress in which she had told him she was starving. He bought potatoes and flour, a piece of meat, tea, crackers, and a piece of butter, altogether as much as he could carry. There was another road which led to Granny Nesmith's house; and Derry took it, to avoid the boys, who would be very likely to ask him questions. He met nobody except Squire Critchett, the Cedarville lawyer, and another gentleman, who was so muffled up that he could not see his face, driving together in a sleigh. Squire Critchett looked at him curiously, as if he wondered where he could be going with such a load, but, to Derry's great relief, he did not ask.

Granny Nesmith's face brightened wonderfully at sight of Derry.

"I didn't feel sure that you'd come back. But folks mostly is better than you think. I a'n't so bad as folks say."

"A'n't you?" said Derry, surveying her curiously, and thinking of what he had heard of her ability to turn people into mice. If she had that power it was certainly fortunate that she had not a bad disposition.

"When I tell boys that I'll turn them into mice, or grind their bones in my coffee-mill, I don't really mean it."

"Don't you?" said Derry; and for all his good sense, he did feel a little easier in his mind.

This was after he had chopped some wood and was building a fire in the stove. He was going to toast some crackers, as he had seen his mother do for people who were ill, but Granny Nesmith could not wait for that; she devoured the crackers so voraciously that nobody could have doubted that she was starving. When she had had her cup of tea, which she actually helped to make herself, although she was so weak that she could not move without help, she assured Derry, with tears, that he had saved her life. And Derry went home feeling quite happy in spite of the loss of the Reindeer. Granny Nesmith made him solemnly promise not to tell what had happened, and he also promised, of his own accord, to come and see her again, after school the next day.

Getting home was the worst of it, for there was a family chorus of "Where is your sled? What's become of the Reindeer?" Even the old, one-eyed parrot who had been a member of the family before Derry was born, and always thought she had a right to have her say, began to cackle out. "What 's 'come o' the Reinneer? What 's 'come o' the Reindeer?" And Derry had nothing to say to anybody except that he couldn't tell what had become of the Reindeer. His father and mother did not ask many questions; they were very much in the habit of trusting Derry, because they had found that they could.

But the twins, Ichabod and Isaac, would keep the question going, and the parrot echoed it, until Derry, although he wasn't a very bad tempered boy, felt as if he should like to thrash the twins and strangle the parrot. And in the midst of it who should come walking in but Uncle Peter! Uncle Peter, who never before since Derry's rememberance had been known to come to Cedarville in the winter.

He asked them all about their Christmas presents, which seemed very unlike him, and he fixed his keen black eyes on Derry's face until Derry actually felt cold chills creeping down his back. He knew where that sled came from, Derry was sure, and what would he say to know that Derry had

sold it? And the twins both piped up, in their shrill little voices that could be heard above every other sound, and told Uncle Peter that Derry had come home without his sled, and would not tell what had become of it; and that dreadful parrot began to shriek, "What's 'come o' the Reindeer? What's 'come o' the Reindeer?" Uncle Peter did not say a word, but sat staring at Derry, with a smile which Derry thought was awful grim and sarcastic, about the corners of his mouth.

The next morning at the breakfast table a very strange thing happened. That old, one eyed parrot, who was generally stupid and didn't seem to have her wits about her at all in the morning, began to scream out in her very loudest and most distinct tones:—

"Polly knows what's come o' the Reindeer! Polly knows! Polly knows. 'T other side of Rattling Brook, Derry! 'T other side of Rattling Brook!"

Derry was frightened. He felt sure that his hair would stand up, if ever anybody's did.

And Uncle Peter sat and smiled.

"Did you lose the sled into Rattling Brook, Derry How could you when it was frozen?" demanded the twins in chorus.

"How's Granny Nesmith, Derry? Poor Granny Nesmith's cold and hungry! cold and hungry!" cried Polly in a doleful voice.

"What is the matter with that parrot? I'm afraid she annoys Uncle Peter," said Mrs. Trimmer, who arose and muffled Poll's cage with a bandanna handkerchief.

And Polly subsided into quiet after a few angry and unintelligible cacklings.

Derry breathed more freely, but he was very much bewildered and scared, and convinced that there was a witch about somewhere; if it was not Uncle Peter it was Polly.

And every time Derry came into the room that parrot would begin to talk about the Reindeer and Rattling Brook and Granny Nesmith, and all the family, especially the twins, talked a great deal about it, and asked Derry what he supposed she could mean, and Derry felt himself growing so thin that his jacket was too loose for him.

"I inquired about Granny Nesmith this morning," said Mrs. Trimmer, one day. "Polly made me think of her. Mr. Damon, the baker, said he came by her house this morning, and there was a good pile of wood, all chopped, beside her door, and her paths were all shoveled out, and he thought he smelled doughnuts. Somebody must have help her, I think."

Derry's face became the color of his father's bandanna handkerchief, for he had not forgotten his promise to Granny Nesmith; he had been to see her two or three times, and it was he who had chopped her wood and shoveled out her paths, and if it had not been for the Reindeer, Mr. Damon, the baker, would never have smelled doughnuts from Granny Nesmith's kitchen.

"Ho! ho! what's 'come o' the Reindeer?" shouted Poll, with a great laugh.

And there Uncle Peter sat and smiled. That day he went away, and a few days after they received a letter from him with a bank check inclosed, at which all the little Trimmers gazed in round-eyed wonder. This is what Uncle Peter wrote:—

"The enclosed check is to pay Derry's tuition at the P——— Academy, where he told me he wanted to go, and to supply him with a suitable outfit. I wish to send him to college when he is prepared (as he told me that he had a great desire to go), and to support him as if he were my own son, as he will be my heir. I do this because he has restored to me my faith in humanity, by showing me that at least one person in the world will sacrifice himself to do good to another, without hope of reward. Tell Derry that I took a sleigh-ride with Squire Critchett from Lincolnville to Cedarville, one day, and that the squire has had much practice in discovering secrets. Also that Poll and I are old friends, and sometimes have a little conversation before breakfast."

"What does all this mean?" said Papa Trimmer, wiping his glasses to be sure that he was reading it rightly.

"That's what's come o' the Reindeer!" shouted Poll.

HOME TOPICS.

HOT ROOMS.—Scarcely any one thing is so injurious to health as living in a temperature much above temperate heat. The degeneracy of the human constitution from what it was fifty or one hundred years in this country is attributed very much to this source. The introduction of stoves and furnaces has worked much evil as well as benefit. Then the improvements in the construction of dwellings, making rooms almost air-tight, and closed in with double windows, renders such residences with the modern heated apparatus applied, really unhealthful, especially to persons spending most of their time in doors. And, those who are passing in and out of such rooms, must be greatly exposed to taking sudden colds. Again at this season of the year, it is unwise to commence keeping rooms or a residence very warm, in as much as if you do, you must continue and increase the temperture through the winter.

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ENGLISH PLUM PUDDING.—Soak one pound of stale bread in one pint of hot milk; when cold add one-half pound of granulated sugar and the yolks of eight eggs, beaten to a cream, one pound of raisins, stoned and floured, one-half pound of currants, cleaned and floured, one-half pound of chopped figs, one-quarter of a pound of citron, cut and floured, one pound of beef suet, chopped and salted, one-quarter of a cup of wine, one-quarter of a cup of brandy, one nutmeg, grated, one teaspoonful of cinnamon, three-quarters of a teaspoonful of mace, and three-quarters of a teaspoonful of cloves. Beat well together, add the whites of eight eggs, beaten stiff, and steam for six hours. For the bread, use the inside of a baker's loaf, taking out the centre and crumming it between the hands. The best way to clean currants is to rub them in flour, then put them in a bowl and cover them with water; then wash them between the hands, changing the water several times; when clean spread on a towel on a pan and dry slowly. Have the, raisins stoned, chopped, and floured, flouring as one chops. If the suet proves sticky in chopping, sprinkle lightly with flour. Butter may be used instead of suet, and should be creamed before adding to the pudding. English plum pudding made in this way will keep for months. When wishing to serve some of this dessert, cut off the requisite amount and steam it just long enough to heat through.

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BRANDY SAUCE.—Cream one-half cup of butter, and beat in gradually one cup of light-brown sugar, then add slowly one-quarter of a cup of brandy. Just before serving heat the sauce a little over hot water, beat well, add a slight grating of nutmeg, and serve at once. Measure the butter solid. If one hasn't the light-brown sugar, use powdered sugar. Have the bowl in which the butter, is to be creamed heated by pouring in hot water and pouring it directly out. Cream the butter with a wooden spoon. The juice of canned fruits and cream may be used instead of brandy, and a very delicate flavor obtained.

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TO MAKE DUTCH CHEESE.—I was given this receipt some years ago, and sent it to you for publication, as it proved to be excellent, and the cheese will be appreciated by all who are fond of cheese—and who is not? It is as follows:—Allow the milk to thicken; then heat gently over a fire in a large kettle till the curd separates from the whey, then dip out into a colander or other suitable vessel, so that the whey can be pressed out of the curds as dry as possible; after all the curds are pressed out crumble up with the hands as can be done, then press them down in an earthern vessel, and let it stand a few days till it becomes throughly heated. Don't omit to stir it throughout daily, afterwards pressing it down, so that every portion may become heated alike; now take it out and salt to taste. A small quantity of butter makes it richer, but it is not positively necessary, as it is very good without it. Then take a deep basin or basins (according to the quantity), grease them well, press them even full of cheese, and set them in a stove or oven, and bake till slightly brown on the top, when your cheese is done.

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CODFISH BALLS.—Two pounds of boneless fish, soaked and boiled over night, and well-beaten before breakfast; boil twelve or fifteen good sized potatoes; mash them very smooth, with milk, and a large teaspoonful of butter; beat in the codfish; add one egg; if not soft enough, add a little more milk; make into a cake and fry. The secret of good fish cakes is to have the potatoes fresh boiled and beaten very light.

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EGGS FONDUE.—Beat six eggs until light, add salt and a dash of cayenne and two heaping teaspoonfuls of grated cheese (Parmesan is best, but any hard rich cheese may be used); put a tablespoonful of butter in a frying pan, and when hot turn in the eggs; stir until smooth and sufficiently cooked. Serve on bits of buttered toast.

CURIOUS AND OTHER MATTERS.

A SAVAGE MARRIAGE.

It may interest women to learn that the islanders of New Guinea are married not according to their own inclinations, but those of their parents. They are most frequently affianced at a very tender age, but are afterward forbidden to associate with each other. Indeed, this is carried so far that the girl may not even look at her future husband. Both must avoid all contact with the members, both masculine and feminine, of the family in which they are about to enter. Their wedding ceremonies are characterized by a reserve and a modesty very remarkable in a savage people of the tropics. Adorned with the most beautiful ornaments, the bride is conducted at night in a torchlight procession through the village. One woman carries her on her back, while another binds her arms, as though she were a captive, and leads her by the rope to the house of her betrothed. This is a symbol of slavery—a souvenir of the ancient servitude which the aristocratic class has preserved. There is nothing of this in the possessions of the poor.

On reaching their destination the bridegroom is presented to the bride's relatives, who lead him into her chamber. She awaits him with her back turned, indicating that she fears to meet his conquering gaze. The young man approaches till within two feet of her, turns on his heel, and then they are back to back in the midst of a numerous assembly, the men on one side, the women on the other. After the entertainment the bride is led to her own room, still not daring to meet the terrible glance of her husband, and keeping her back turned to the door. Seeing this, the husband also turns his back on her. The whole night is spent in this manner; they sit there motionless having some one to brush away the flies, and without speaking a word. If they grow sleepy some one of the assistants, who takes turns in doing this service, nudges them with his elbow. If they keep wide awake, they are assured of a long life and green old age. In the morning they separate, still without looking at each other, in order to refresh themselves after the fatigues of the previous night. This performance is continued for four nights, and on the fifth morning, with the first rays of the sun, the young people may look each other in the face. That suffices; the marriage is considered accomplished and the newly-wedded pair receive the customary congratulations.

LEOPARDS AS PETS.—Sir Samuel Baker in his recent book gives some excellent advise to those adventurous people who endeavor to make pets of wild beasts, especially tigers and leopards.

Although the cubs of leopards are charming playthings and exhibit much intelligence and apparent affection, it is a great mistake to adopt such companions, for their hereditary instincts are certain to become developed in full-grown life and lead to grave disaster.

The common domestic cat is sometimes uncertain with her claws, and most people must have observed that the seats and backs of leather chairs are well marked by the sharp talons, which can not refrain from exercising their power upon anything which tempts their operation.

I remember a leopard in Khartoum that was considered tame. The beast broke its chain, and, instead of enjoying its liberty in a peaceful manner, it at once fastened upon the neck of a much-prized cow, and would have killed the animal had it not been itself beaten to death with clubs.

All such creatures are untrustworthy, and they should be avoided as pets. The only class of leopards that should become the companion of man is the most interesting of the species, the hunting leopard. I have never met a person that had shot one of these animals in a wild state, and such an animal is rarely met with in the jungle.

The hunting-leopard is totally different in shape from all other leopards. Instead of being low and long, with short but massive legs, it stands extremely high, the neck is long, the head small, the eyes large and piercing, the legs long and the body light.

It is generally admitted that the hunting-leopard is the fastest animal in the world as it can overtake upon open ground the well-known black buck, which surpasses in speed the fastest English greyhound.

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ROOM FOR ALL IN HEAVEN.—The following remarkable calculation on the capacity of heaven, which has frequently been published, but it is a curiosity in its way and well worthy a place among our other "wonders," is taken bodily from Bombaugh's "Gleanings for the Curious."

The basis of the calculation, which will furnish much food for thought, is found in Revelations xxi: 16. "And he measured the city (the

New Jerusalem) with a reed, 12,000 furlongs. The length, the breadth, and the height are equal."

Let us see: Twelve thousand furlongs, 7,920-000 feet, which, being cubed, is 943,088,000,000,-000,000,000,000,000 cubic feet. Half of this we will reserve for the throne of God and the court of heaven, half of the remainder for streets, leaving a balance of 124,198,272,000,000,000,000 cubic feet.

Divide this last by 4,096, the cubical feet in a room sixteen feet square, and you will find that there is still enough left for 30,321,843,750,000,-000 rooms!

We will now suppose that the world always will contain 990,000,000 of inhabitants, and that a generation lasts thirty-three and one-third years, making in all 5,270,000,000 for each century, that the world will stand 1,000 centuries, making in all 2,970,000,000,000 souls.

Then suppose that there are 100 worlds equal to this in point of number of inhabitants and duration of years, making 297,000,000,000,000 then heaven, according to the measurement above, is large enough to allot 100 rooms, each sixteen feet square, to each soul.

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OUR DAILY BREAD.—When the German poet Herder was dying his family pressed food and wine upon him. "Can you not give me," he said "a great thought to refresh me?"

Byron whenever he found his creative power growing feeble, threw himself into scenes of great beauty, and waited until nature "struck the eletric chain wherewith we're darkly bound."

When George Eliot was preparing to write a novel, Mr. Lewes (who guarded the health of her mind as parents do that of the bodies of their children) was used to take her to Switzerland, or Italy, and took care that she heard noble music every day.

"How do you infuse such power and magnetism into your sermons?" asked a young clergyman of one of the most eloquent of American pulpit orators. "Your life is eventless and monotonous, you meet commonplace people, and are deluged with commonplace thoughts, like the rest of us. How do you keep yourself awake and above it all?"

"Before I sit down to write I go to Five Points, or to the wharves where the immigrants come in, or a prison or hospital," was the reply. "I face human nature, stripped of its externals, or some awful problem of vice or disease and death, in which a man meets God."

In a word, these people, before attempting to do great work, sought, like, Herder, "a great thought to refresh them."

The defect in the life of many American families is not that it is vicious or impure, but that it is cramped, small, and common. The whole thought and conversation of a household or a social circle often run upon their own petty business and work, and the personal affairs of themselves and their neighbors; and this is not for days and months, but years, until monotonous, gossiping youth sinks into monotonous, gossiping old age.

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THE ADVANTAGE OF YEARS.—You are getting into years. Yes, but years are getting into you—the ripe, rich years; the genial, mellow years; the lusty, luscious years! One by one the crudities of your youth are falling off from you—the vanity, the egotism, the insulation, the bewilderment, the uncertainty. Nearer and nearer you are approaching yourself; you are becoming master of your situation. On the ruins of shattered plans you find your vantage ground. Your broken hopes, your thwarted purposes, your defeated aspirations, become a staff of strength by which you mount to a sublimer height. With self-possession and self-command of all things, the title-deed of creation, forfeited, is reclaimed. The king has come to his own again. Earth and sea and sky pour out their largeness of love. All the crowds pass down to lay their treasure at your feet.

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BIBLE MARRIAGE LAWS.

[From a "Family" Bible of 1706.]

A man may not marry his—

1. Grandmother.
2. Grandfather's wife.
3. Wife's grandmother.
4. Father's sister.
5. Mothers's sister.
6. Father's brother's wife.
7. Mother's brother's wife.
8. Wife's father's sister.
9. Wife's mother's sister.
10. Mother.
11. Stepmother.
12. Wife's mother.
13. Daughter.
14. Wife's daughter.
15. Son's wife.
16. Sister.
17. Wife's sister.
18. Brother's wife.
19. Son's daughter.
20. Daughter's daughter.
21. Son's son's wife.
22. Daughter's son's wife.
23. Wife's son's daughter.
24. Wife's daughter's daughter.
25. Brother's daughter.
26. Sister's daughter.
27. Brother's son's wife.
28. Sister's son's wife.
29. Wife's brother's daughter.
30. Wife's sister's daughter.

EDITOR'S DRAWER.

THINGS PLEASANT AND OTHERWISE.

EVILS OF MORNING PIE.

"Mother," says I, "is that a pie?"
In tones akin to scorning;
"It is, my son," quoth she, "and one
Full ripe for the Christmas morning!
It's fat with plums as big as your thumbs,
Reeking with sapid juices,
And you'll fine within all kinds of sin
Our grocery store produces!"
"Oh, well," says I,
"Seein' it's a pie
And is guaranteed to please, ma'am,
By your advice,
I'll take a slice
If you'll kindly pass the cheese, ma'am!"

But once a year comes Christmas cheer
And one should then be merry,
But as for me, as you can see,
I'm disconcerted, very;
For that darned old pie sticks grimly by
My organs of digestion,
And that 'twill stay by me till May
Or June I make no question.
So unto you,
Good friends and true,
I tip this solemn warning:
At every price,
Eschew the vice
Of eating pie in the morning!

—*Chicago News.*

A CHRISTMAS ECHO.

"Wonder what in thunder they bought that thing[for me for!" exclaimed Glumpton, as he contemputously tossed into a chair a glossy silk dressing-gown, quilted and braided and tasselled right gorgeously.

"'Sh!" cautioned Mrs G.; "I told them not to do it; but the girls said they were bound to make it for you, and they were bound to make you wear it after it was made."

"Well, I guess they'll be older than they are now when they see me wearing such a confounded piece of man-millinery as that! Shirt sleeves are good enough in my house; and if the gals are so plaguey proud that they are ashamed to see their own father with his coat off, in his own house, the best thing for them to do is to pack up and be off—and the sooner the better."

"Well, well; I wouldn't say anything about it to them. It'll only make them feel bad."

"Feel bad! Confound it! they'd oughter known better than to spend their money on such fiddle-faddles. You women folks are the biggest ninnyhammers agoing. When you get started on a craze, there's no let-up to you. This Christmas business is the biggest humbug of the age, and if I had my way about it, I'd make it a penal offence for any body, especially a woman, to buy a present—a *present?* My own money bought it, I'll bet, I say I'd make it a penal offence for a woman to buy a present for any body, unless she knew it was something he was actually suffering for; and even then, I can't see why a man shouldn't be allowed to buy what he wants himself—he'd get it a darned sight cheaper, I'll bet, though perhaps it wouldn't have so much flummery about it."

"There, there! Don't say another word. I hear the girls coming. They'd feel awfully disappointed to hear you run on so."

"I don't care, I"—

What it was that Glumpton didn't care must ever remain a secret; for before he could finish his sentence the door was thrown open to admit Jeannette and Fannie, his two daughters. They advanced with eager steps their faces alight with unwonted excitement.

"What, papa!" exclaimed Jeannette, "not got your dressing-gown on yet! Come, this will never do. Here, put your arms in these sleeves immediately! There," bringing the garment together and fastening it in front, "now look in the glass and see how grand you look." Jeannette held him at arm's length to contemplate his magnificence, as she continued, "Just look at him, Fannie! Isn't that a papa to be proud of?"

"Splendid!" ejaculated Fanny; "'Twon't do to let any of the young ladies see him. They'd all fall in love with him, certain; and my! wouldn't mamma be jealous? And who could blame her?"

"That's a fact," cried Jeannette; "we'll have to keep him all to ourselves. It'll never do to let anybody see him, or we'll surely lose him. Why, papa, a stranger would declare you were our brother. *Father* to such great girls! H'm! the idea is absurd. Just look in that glass, you naughty papa, and see for yourself."

"There, go away," said Glumpton, looking as awkward as a green schoolboy; "don't bother me; take it off."

"Yes, we shall bother you; won't we, Fannie? and we sha'n't take it off, either. Take it off! The idea! You know well enough that no amount of money would tempt you to take it off, you vain thing! You're admiring yourself this minute at a rate that's quite awful. Take it off yourself, if you want to. There, I knew you couldn't. Well, we don't blame you; do we,

Fannie? Come now, breakfast is ready. Fannie and I have got the table all set, and everything will be cold if you don't come down immediately."

And Jeannette passed her hand through one arm, while Fannie performed a similar service for the other, and between the two he was carried off triumphantly, dressing-gown and all, to the dining-room.

When he got there, Glumpton was not more than half mollified, though he caught himself half a dozen times bestowing furtive glances of admiration at his new toggery; but before he had got far along with his hot rolls, his nicely done chops and fixings, and after swallowing half a cupful of the fragrant decoction of the coffee-berry, he was distinctly seen to smile once, twice, thrice. It was all up with him then, and before he knew it he was chatting away as cheerily as the cheeriest.

And what is more to the purpose, as he sat back in his chair at the close of the meal, he frankly and freely confessed that he had never enjoyed such a breakfast since he couldn't remember when. But what was strangest of all, he didn't take his dressing-gown off all day; no, sir, and I don't believe money could have tempted him to take it off, either, notwithstanding all he had said against it that very morning. Evidently his opinion had changed since then.

Glumpton was right. When a woman gets started, there *is* no let-up to her, and a sensible man should know it, and submit gracefully.—*Boston Transcript.*

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THE DUTCHMAN'S INSURANCE.—A story is told of a German who had taken the precaution to insure the life of his wife for $5,000, and his stable for $900, believing the former might die and the latter be burnt, and he could not get along without some compensation for the loss. Both policies were taken from the same agent. In a few months after the stable had been insured it was destroyed by fire. Shmidt quietly notified the agent, and hinted that he would expect the $900 at the earliest possible moment. The agent at once sent a carpenter to ascertain the cost of erecting a new stable of the same dimensions, having ascertained that the property had been insured for more than it was worth. The builder reported that he could replace the stable with new material for $500, but unfortunately there was an ordinance preventing the erection of frame buildings—the old stable having been of wood. He was asked to estimate the cost of a brick stable, and reported the amount $750. The agent then notified Shmidt that he would build him a new brick stable in the place of the old frame one, but Shmidt became very indignant at the proposition saying:—

"I do not understand this insurance business. I pay you for nine hundred dollars, and when my shtable burn down you make me a new one. I not want new shtable, I want nine hundred dollars."

The agent reasoned with Shmidt, but all to no purpose. When the stable was about finished, Shmidt went to consult a lawyer, thinking that he could still get the amount of the policy, besides having the new stable.

The lawyer, however, informed him that the company had a right to make good the loss by building a new stable, and expressed surprise at bringing suit against them.

"But," said Shmidt, "I insure for nine hundred dollar, and dis feller put up dem shtable for seven hundred and fifty—I do not understand the insurance business."

Finding that he could not compel the payment by law, he became disgusted with the insurance business altogether. Calling upon the agent, Shmidt said:—

"Mr. Agent, I want yon to stop dem insurance on mine frow. I do not pay any more monish dat way; I do not understand this insurance business."

Agent (surprised)—"Why, Mr. Shmidt, you are doing a very foolish thing. You have paid considerable on this policy already, and if your wife should die you will get $5,000."

"Yaw, dat ish vat you tell me now," said Shmidt. "Ven I pays you on my shtable you say I get nine hundred dollar if it burns down. So it was burnt, and you not give me mine monish. You say, 'Oh, dat was an old frame shtable,' and you no pay me nine hundred dollar. Ven my frow dies, den you say to me. 'Oh, she was an old dutch woman; she not word anydings; I get you a new English wife!' You not fool Shmidt again. I not understand dis insurance business."

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WHAT THE EDITOR GETS.—When a child is born into the world a physician is present and gets $10 for officiating at the important event. The editor heralds the advent of the stranger and gets a cursing for making a mistake as to the sex or date of the arrival.

After awhile the child becomes a man, the minister is called to perform the marriage ceremony and walks off with a $10 bill in his pocket for his trouble. The editor is again called upon, and chronicles this event by drawing on his imagination to make the bride and groom the most respectable people in the county. His only pay is to be asked for a few "sample" copies of his paper to send to some absent friends.

In time the once baby, once happy groom, but now a man well advanced in years is brought down by death. Again the physician is called in and in due time presents his bill, the undertaker is present and officiates at the funeral, and

in time wants $100 for performing the last sad rites; while the editor is expected to complete the drama by holding up the deceased as a model gentleman, and one who is at present flying up the golden stairs. The probabilities are at the same time that the baby, the groom and the dead man have been so infernally stingy that he has stinted his wife and children and had never contributed one cent to the support of his local paper.

What does the editor get? He gets left.

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A BOY'S COMPOSITION.—Wunst ther was a precher and he got onto a ship and he saled and saled and saled and bime by he come near a iland and when he come near the iland a big storm come up and it blode and blode and blode and the precher and all the people on the ship thought they was goin to git drowned and a little bird got blode of the iland and tride to git onto the ship but evry time he tride to git onto the ship the ship leaned over the other way and the littel bird got left but he didnt set down in the water and cry he just kept peggin away and bime by he lit down into a sale and a saler went up and got the littel bird out of the sale and give him some bred and water and bime by when the storm blode away the sun come out and the ship come to land and the precher and all the people was glad and the bird flude away.

Moral—If you don't git what you want first just you keep peggin away and youl get it bime by.

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WANTED TO BE HOME.—Tommy was at boarding-school, and it had been decided that, for various practical reasons, it would be better for him to spend Thanksgiving with a neighboring aunt, instead of taking the longer journey home. This conclusion was announced to him with as much gentleness as possible, and in a few days his father received the following note:

"DEAREST PAPA:—When the turkey's in the oven, and the 'taoes in the pot, when the cranberry bubbles redly, and the pudding's smoking hot—when the nuts are cracked and waiting, and the raisins heap the plate, and you go on so awful hungry that you'd rather die than wait—'then you'll remember me!' O pa, mayn't I go home?

"Your miserable TOM."

They sent for him by the next mail.

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TOO FUNNY.—In a small New Hampshire town, which happens to be the junction of two roads, a young woman had occasion to change cars. She explained to the station agent that she was to wait for the 7.40 train for such a place, and he nodded gruffly. A train came in about 7.25, and she asked the guardian of the place, "Is that my train?" "No," said he gruffly, "it ain't." She waited patiently. In half an hour she advanced again. "Isn't the train to —— very late?" she asked. "Gone," replied the man laconically. "When did it go?" "Went at 7.27." "What? You said that train wasn't my train!" "It wasn't your train. That train belonged to the New England and Arctic railroad." The humorist is now looking for a job.

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SUDDENLY.—Presence of mind is not always monopolized by the brave and wise, nor is it uniformly cultivated for great and good purposes.

Several of the pupils in a certain "backwoods" district determined not to study geography. The teacher believed that they were old enough to begin the subject, and accordingly called one of the oldest boys to her desk and spoke to him of the necessity of a knowledge of his own country and other countries.

"I sha'n't study g'ography till I git ready!" growled the youngster.

The teacher rose quickly and seized him by the collar, intending to shake him, when the young rascal hastily added, "But I'm ready now."

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SHE "PARSED" BUTTER.—Among the guests at an eastern mountain resort, where the waiters are all Massachusetts school ma'ams, is a Texas man who is not noted for grammatical accuracy in speaking. He said to a waiter: "Miss pars the butter?" "Butter," said the school ma'am promptly, "is a noun; common noun, because it is the name of a thing and a very poor thing, too, sometimes; singular number, when strong enough to go alone; feminine gender, as indicated by the long hairs found on it, in the objective case, subject to oleomargerine understood." The Texas man said he would try and get along without eating any more butter, if that was what ailed it.

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A lady in Rhinebeck was recently reading to her child—a boy of seven years—a story of a little fellow whose father was taken ill and died, whereupon the youngster set himself diligently at work to assist in supporting himself and his mother. When she had finished the story the following dialogue ensued:—

Mother—"Now, my little man, if pa was to die; wouldn't you work to help your mother?"

Boy—(not relishing the idea of work,)—"Why, ma; what for? Ain't we got a good house to live in?"

Mother—"Oh, yes, my child; but we can't eat the house, you know."

Boy—"Well, ain't we got flour and sugar and other things in the store-room?"

Mother—"Certainly, my dear, but they will not last long, and what then?"

Boy—"Well, ma, ain't there enough to last till you could get another husband?"

Ma gave it up.

SECRETS.—A family had some theatre tickets which not being able to use, they turned over to a green servant girl, who said she had never been to a theatre. After receiving directions the girl started out. About nine o'clock the family was surprised to see the girl back, and inquired what the matter was.

"Why, Mary, didn't you find the place?" was asked.

"Indade I did, and is was a foine place, and a gintleman showed me a sate near the front."

"And why didn't you stay?"

"Well, ivery wan was looking at a foine pictur up front, and the place was full of foine ladies and gintlemen, and afther a bit they took the pictur up, and some people come out and began talking family matters, and so I thought I'd better come home."

A PROLONGED FAREWELL.

9 P.M.

10 P.M.

11 P.M.

12 P.M.